

# ***Community Policing in Brookmont Farms:***

## ***An Evaluation for the New Castle County Police Department***

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### **Volume 4: A Case Study**



**February 2001**

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**Center for Community Development & Family Policy  
College of Human Services, Education & Public Policy  
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## **Volume IV A Case Study**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brookmont Farms is a 544-unit townhouse community located on the north side of Route 40 in New Castle County. It was developed in the early 1970s for moderate-income home buyers. As early as 1974, concerns were raised that a significant proportion of the residents were renters not property owners. The economic recession in the late 1970s forced some property owners to abandon their units so that by 1980 an alarming 44 percent of the units were vacant. The balance between homeowners and renters continued to shift throughout the 1980s and by the beginning of the 1990s the environment in Brookmont Farms had deteriorated, crime rates were high, and problems including domestic violence, disorderly conduct, the use and sale of drugs and civil disputes plagued the community.

Starting in 1990, New Castle County initiated a multi-faceted effort to renew the community. A Redevelopment Plan was prepared which included a Neighborhood Stabilization Program, a Community Facilitator was hired and a temporary Community Services Facility was installed, a County park was constructed at the entrance to the neighborhood, and in 1993, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware opened a large facility adjacent to Brookmont Farms. As part of the County efforts, the New Castle County Police started the first community foot patrol program in suburban New Castle County by assigning a full-time problem solving team of two officers to Brookmont Farms. This initiative, along with a coordinated plan to arrest drug dealers and remove children from unfit homes, resulted in an overall 23 percent decrease in calls for police service.

Nonetheless, the redevelopment effort had mixed results in its first four years. Home ownership remained low and crime continued to be a problem. In June of 1997, the New Castle County Police submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Justice for a grant to advance community policing in the County. By the time the grant had been awarded and implemented, much of the basic community policing strategy in Brookmont Farms had been extensively tested. Essentially, this strategy extended the assignment of two patrol officers to the neighborhood, frequently utilized foot patrols, encouraged the officers to collaborate with the various public and nonprofit agencies serving the community, extended efforts to use the Section 8 housing regulations and parole violations to evict troublemakers, and promoted self-policing by residents.

The overall effort since 1996, which included the period of the grant, had a number of positive results. Most significantly, the calls for police service declined from 1,326 in 1996 to 704 in 1999. In this period, vandalism and disorderly conduct dropped from 495 incidents to 222 incidents, burglary and thefts from 133 incidents to 32 incidents, and assaults from 92 incidents to 24 incidents.

### **Community Policing in Brookmont Farms: Perceptions of Residents**

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A survey of residents conducted in the spring of 2000 found that fully 60 percent of the respondents said that conditions related to crime in Brookmont Farms are getting better, almost twice the proportion of respondents (33 percent) who felt that conditions related to crime in New Castle County are getting better. Sixty percent of the respondents felt that the community is patrolled satisfactorily and nearly three-quarters said that the police have given special attention to Brookmont Farms. Almost 83 percent described the service provided by the police as excellent or good. When asked about the foot patrols, no one indicated that they should be removed from the neighborhood.

Agency representatives were also very positive about the community policing effort. One individual said: "I just can't say enough about community policing...you'd just have to be here on a daily basis to see what a difference they've made." And the officers themselves regard community policing as an effective way to reduce crime in a troubled neighborhood and an efficient use of resources.

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

**Early History.** Brookmont Farms is a 544-unit townhouse community located on the north side of Route 40 in New Castle County, Delaware, approximately 10 miles south-southwest of the city of Wilmington (see Map 1)<sup>1</sup>. The community is nestled between Wellington Woods, a single-family, detached housing development, and Glasgow Pines Trailer Park (Map 2)<sup>2</sup>. The first subdivision plans for Brookmont Farms were approved in 1956, with subsequent approvals in 1971 and 1972. Mr. Real Estate was the development corporation which began construction in 1971 and continued by stages through 1976.<sup>3</sup>

The developers of Brookmont Farms had targeted buyers of modest means looking for a better quality of life in a country setting. A large four-bedroom unit sold for about \$23,000, a significant amount of money for the time but less than many other new homes in the area. Many of the homeowners were able to acquire mortgages with very small down payments from Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) and the Veterans Administration, with the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) providing mortgage insurance.

Two basic housing designs, a traditional colonial style and a more contemporary style, guided the construction of two, three, and four bedrooms houses which ranged in size from 1,400 to 2,000 square feet. The community was designed for moderate-income home buyers" and included access from all residential properties to approximately 40 acres of community open space and use of various recreational facilities such as play equipment and a swimming pool/bathhouse located at the entrance to the development. The open space and recreational facilities were to be owned and maintained by community property owners.

As early as 1974, concerns began to be expressed that, contrary to original promises, a significant proportion of the residents were renters not property owners. In 1976, a New Journal investigative reporter uncovered evidence that shoddy construction at Brookmont Farms was overlooked by New Castle County and federal housing inspectors. A flurry of lawsuits and recriminations were set off but the basic problem was never corrected. Property owners raised concerns about the poor quality of construction and the high rate of crime was beginning to

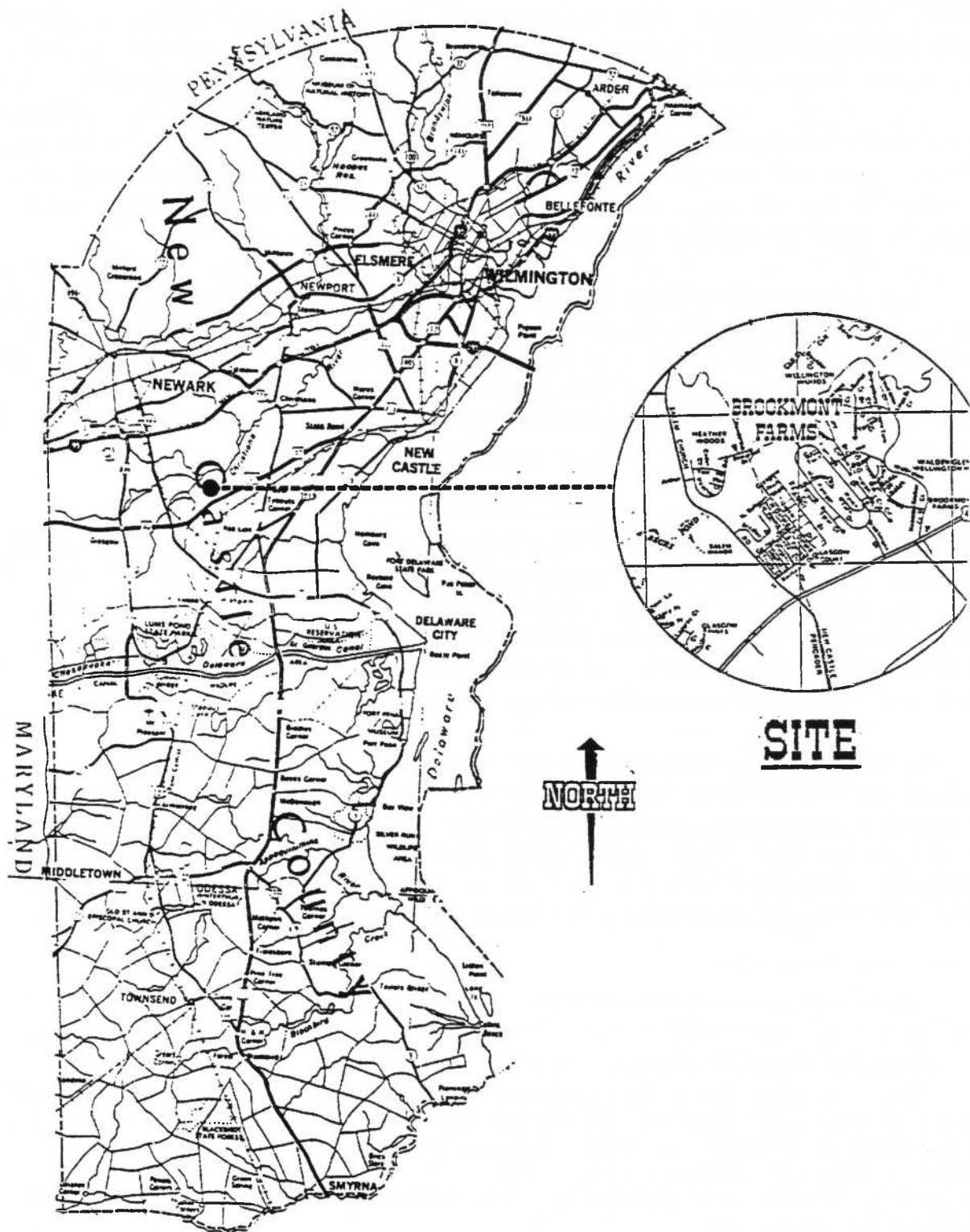
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<sup>1</sup>The source of the map is the **Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan** prepared by the New Castle County Department of Community Development and Housing in 1991, p. 2.

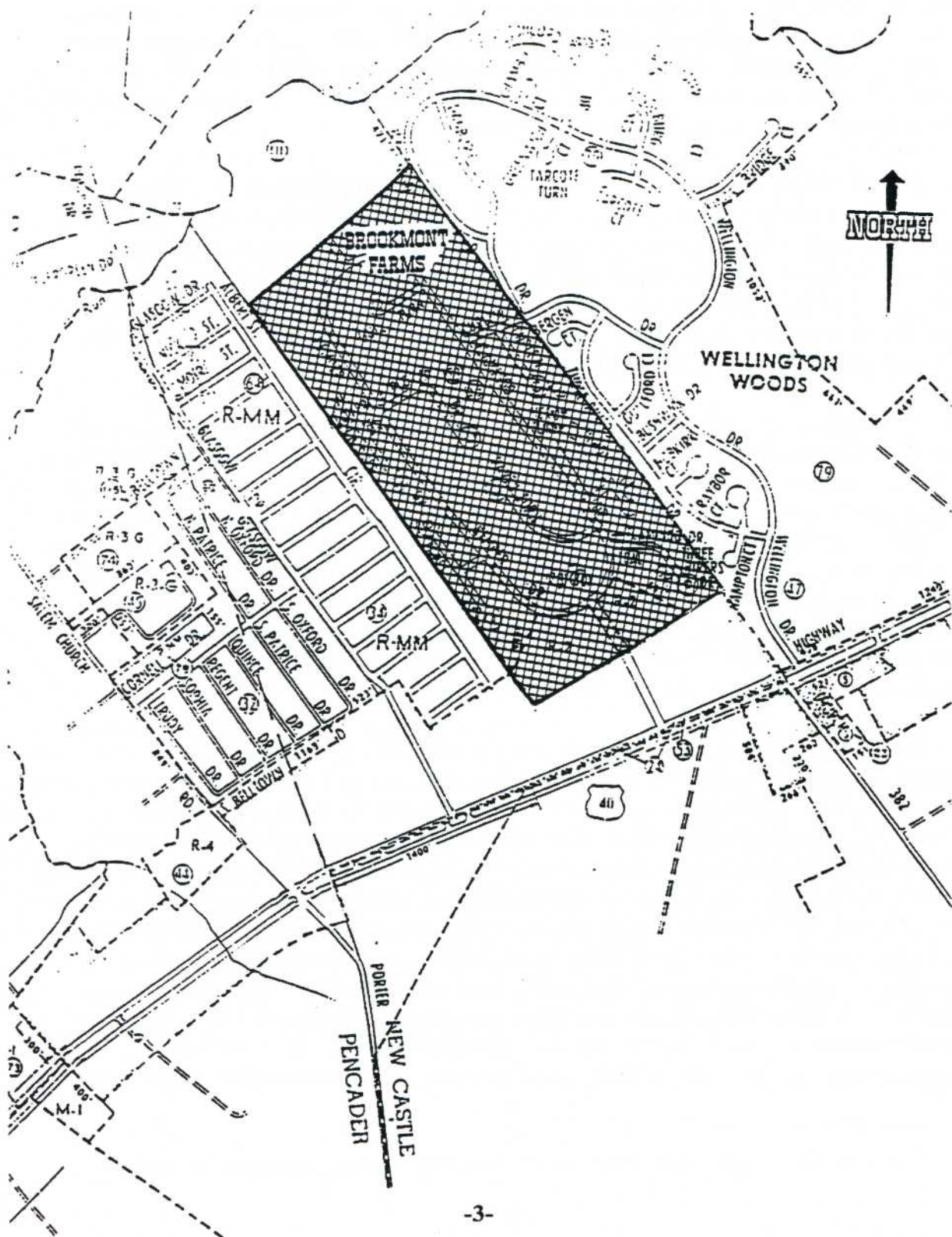
<sup>2</sup>**Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan**, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>This history is drawn from the **Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan**. According to this document, the primary lenders were the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) and Maryland National Bank with the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) providing mortgage insurance. The first third of the development was built with FHA approval. After a lengthy delay, the last section was built with FmHA approval and New Castle County rather than FmHA performed the mortgage inspections. Later in the development, the Veterans Administration also provided some mortgage insurance.

Map 1



Map 2



## Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

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receive attention from the New Castle County police. Some owners who were told that they were buying new units discovered that they, in fact, had brought previously occupied units. Initially the builder, Mr. Real Estate, tried to resolve the construction problems but went out of business and left many property owners with limited incomes with significant repair costs. Since these property owners did not have the resources to make the repairs, units began to deteriorate. Furthermore, the developer did not transfer ownership of the 40 acres of open land to the community and, as a result, the land lay dormant

The economic recession in the late 1970s forced some property owners to abandon their units because of an inability to pay repair bills or make mortgage payments. Two separate task forces were formed by county government in the 1970s to study the situation and while recommendations were made for improvements, they were never successfully implemented. As a result, by 1980, large numbers of properties were abandoned or foreclosed. The 1980 Census reported that 81 percent of Brookmont Farms households owned their homes and 19 percent were renters but an alarming 44 percent of the units were vacant.

Nonetheless, in the early 1980s, Brookmont Farms was seen as a good investment and investors began to purchase and renovate properties and convert them into Section 8 rental units. With the growing number of absentee owners, the balance between homeowners and renters continued to shift so that by April 1990 renters represented 66 percent of the households in the neighborhood.<sup>4</sup> This shift contributed to the creation of an unhealthy environment. Crime rates continued to be high and problems including domestic violence, child abuse, vandalism and disorderly conduct, burglary and thefts, the use and sale of drugs, assaults, and civil disputes plagued the community. Many residents needed social services but lacked reliable transportation, limiting their access to these services as well as to recreation and other youth-oriented activities, medical services, employment and higher education.

**The Redevelopment Plan.** In preparation for a Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan, the County conducted a telephone survey, a door-to-door survey and a "windshield" survey between January and April 1990 to gather information about resident concerns and housing conditions. The surveys determined that while a significant transition had occurred in the community since it was built, there remained a core of long-term residents. Eighteen percent had lived there for ten years or more, another 18 percent had resided in the development from six to ten years. It was also determined that 52 percent of the housing units were in excellent to good condition but fully 48 percent were in fair or poor condition. As a result, housing values were depressed in relation to other parts of the County. Low values combined with the Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) refusal to insure mortgages in Brookmont Farms made it difficult to promote increased home ownership in the neighborhood. At the same time, Brookmont Farms provided some of the most affordable rental housing in New Castle County

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<sup>4</sup>April 1990 Survey by the New Castle County Department of Community Development and Housing.

## Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

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and, therefore, attracted families participating in the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program.

In April of 1990, County Executive Dennis Greenhouse announced the start of the Brookmont Farms Neighborhood Stabilization Program to be undertaken in cooperation with neighborhood residents, nonprofit organizations and state social service agencies. The program had eight goals:

- to control crime by increasing police presence in the form of a foot patrol assigned to Brookmont Farms;
- to install a temporary "Brookmont Farms Community Services Facility" to serve as a temporary field office for County departments, as a meeting place for residents, and as a place to begin operating human service and recreation programs until the construction of a new Boys and Girls Club to serve the area;
- to construct a County park at the entrance to Brookmont Farms;
- to employ a "Community Facilitator" to coordinate activities in Brookmont Farms;
- to improve the condition of houses in Brookmont Farms through Operation Home Fix-Up, a County program offering affordable rehabilitation financing;
- to increase the number of homeowners in Brookmont Farms;
- to create a County coordinating committee to implement the County's objectives and coordinate with residents and other agencies to improve the delivery of social services and access to public transportation; and
- to prepare a Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan to examine the causes of problems in the community and to identify resources and strategies to resolve these problems.

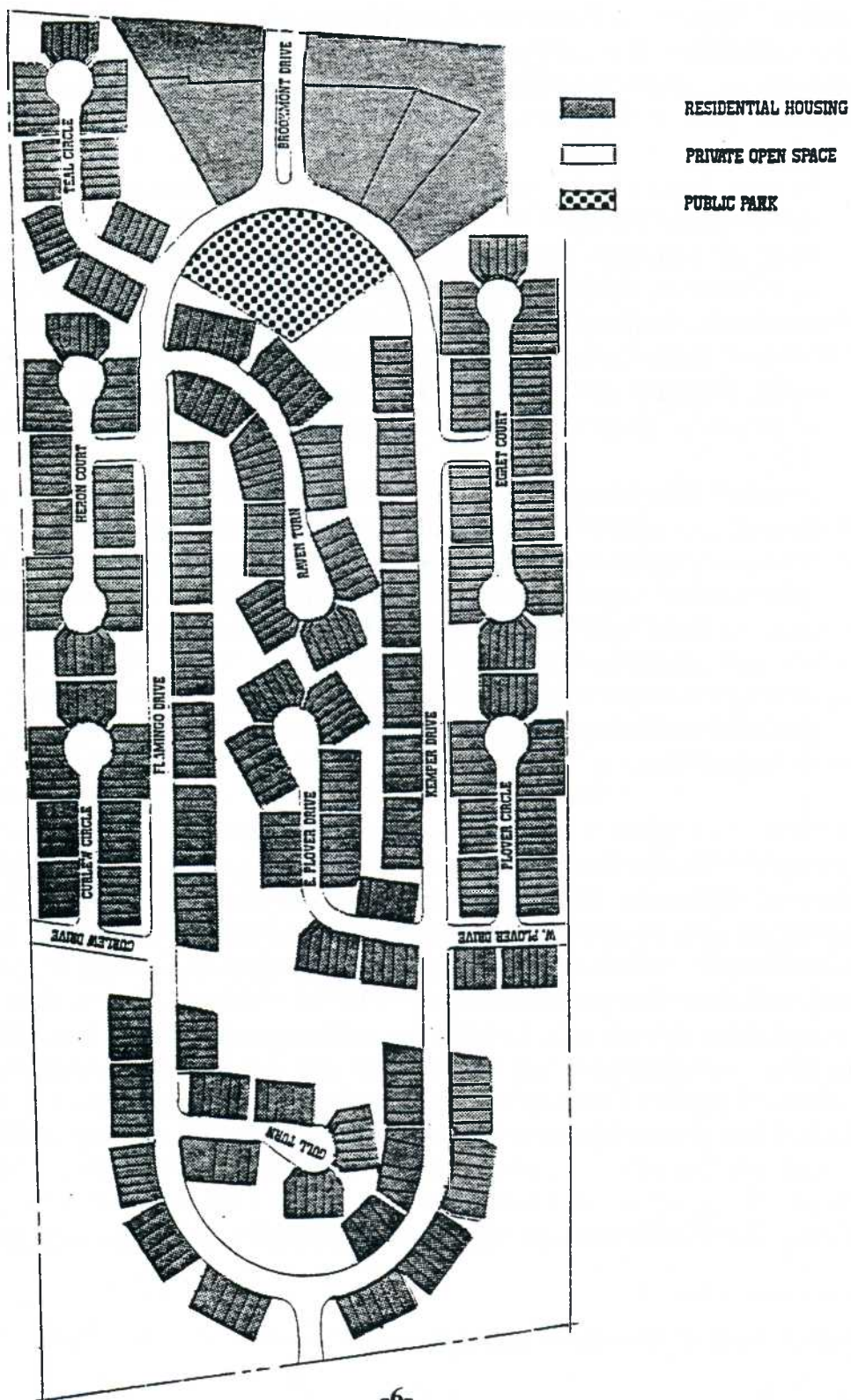
The Community Facilitator was hired in July of 1990 with responsibilities to coordinate the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and to help residents organize events and build an effective community association. During the summer of 1990, New Castle County also acquired, through a sheriff sale, a pie-shaped parcel of open-space in Brookmont Farms at Kemper and Flamingo Drives (Map 3)<sup>5</sup>. Working with community residents on the design, the County completed the installation of the park in October of 1990 which included two large play structures, swings, sliding boards, a basketball court and baseball field, and picnic tables and benches. In addition, a mobile home was located in the park as a temporary solution to the lack of social services in the area. It would provide space for services being offered to Brookmont Farms residents as well as meeting space for community groups and for County staff working in the neighborhood.

Resident input to the Redevelopment Plan was obtained through the community surveys

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<sup>5</sup>Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan, p. 14.

Map 3



## Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

and two series of public meetings held between October and November of 1990 and December 1990 through February 1991. These meetings informed residents about the County's efforts and elicited their views about community problems and their recommendations for improvement.

On July 10, 1991, the County issued the Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan which outlined ten activities that were essential for the success of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program.<sup>6</sup> These included:

- elimination of major housing code violations;
- rehabilitation of approximately 260 houses in fair and poor condition;
- development of a permanent facility for human and recreation services delivery;
- increase in the number of owner-occupied units to at least 280;
- re-establishment of the Brookmont Farms Community Association;
- transfer of the ownership of the common open space to the Brookmont Farms Community Association;
- administration of environmental code inspections;
- improvement in public transportation;
- establishment of a Youth Council; and
- continuance of community foot patrol program until neighborhood stability is achieved.

**Establishment of the Boys and Girls Club Facility.** After making the decision to locate a facility on Route 40 within walking distance of Brookmont Farms, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware began a capital campaign in January 1991. This facility would provide a long-term solution to the need for a multi-purpose service center that was currently being satisfied by the temporary County field office (the Brookmont Farms Community Services Center). Later that year, the Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware approached the staff of the University of Delaware's Center for Community Development and Family Policy (then called the Urban Agent Division) with the request that the Center conduct a needs assessment for the area surrounding the proposed facility.

Collecting incidence data on crime, academic performance, and use of public assistance, and information from a household survey, the 1990 Census, and face-to-face interviews with community leaders, police officers, school administrators, and public officials, the Center found that household respondents in the neighborhoods surrounding the proposed facility thought that the Boys and Girls Club facility would make their neighborhoods better places to live. Respondents from Brookmont Farms, in particular, said that someone in their household would

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<sup>6</sup>See section on Previous Studies for a more extensive summary of the Redevelopment Plan.

## Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

use its programs or services.<sup>7</sup> Those participating in the face-to-face interviews were also enthusiastic about the potential contributions of the Club to the area.

Unfortunately, Brookmont Farms stood considerably apart from the other neighborhoods in terms of the proportion of respondents who indicated problems in their neighborhood. This was particularly the case with regard to the use or sale of illegal drugs and violent criminal behavior. Lack of supervision after school, vandalism/disorderly conduct, and crimes involving property were also frequently mentioned as neighborhood problems. Data on criminal incidence supported the concerns expressed by household respondents. Fully 58 percent of the incidents occurring in 1991 in the study area took place in Brookmont Farms. Brookmont Farms accounted for 82 percent of the drug and alcohol incidents, 62 percent of the civil disputes, 61 percent of the incidents of child abuse or domestic violence, nearly 60 percent of the cases of vandalism and disorderly conduct, and 55 percent of the assaults.

Brookmont Farms also stood out in terms of the number of students and the number of students at risk. Fully 44 percent of the students from the target area resided in Brookmont Farms but this neighborhood housed 81 percent of the students on AFDC, 60 percent of the students who had been held back at least one grade, and 61 percent of those who had less than a D+ average. The 1992 study also showed that a high proportion of the families in Brookmont Farms were receiving public assistance and food stamps in October of 1991.

Of particular importance to the Boys and Girls Clubs was the demographic data from the 1990 Census which showed that fully 26 percent of the study area population was between the ages of 25 to 34, significantly higher than the proportion of the state population in this age group. As a result, the area had a large number of children in the youngest age groups, that is, nine years of age and younger which suggested that there was likely to be substantial demand for the programs and services of the Boys and Girls Club. Not surprisingly, when construction of the Club on Route 40 was completed in May of 1993, it was flooded with several thousand children and youth seeking access to the activities supported by the Club. Originally planned to accommodate 1,700 to 2,500, membership quickly escalated to 4,000.

Shortly after the Club opened, plans were made to remove the community services facility because the Club provided space for the foot patrol officers, groups providing County-funded services to Brookmont Farms such as the Community Legal Aid Society and Neighborhood House, and the Brookmont Farms Civic Association. Unfortunately the mobile home that was being used as the community services facility was burned out by a fire set by vandals before it could be removed from the site.

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<sup>7</sup>See section on Previous Studies for a more complete summary of the findings of the University of Delaware study.

**Early Steps Toward Community Oriented Policing.** The reputation of Brookmont Farms as a place plagued by crime and drugs led the New Castle County Police in May of 1990 to start the first community foot patrol program in suburban New Castle County by assigning a full-time problem solving team of two police officers to Brookmont Farms to answer calls for service and to experiment with intervention techniques.<sup>8</sup> By being a routine presence in the neighborhood, the officers could get to know the residents on a personal basis and be better able to respond to criminal complaints. These officers were supported by the County's Criminal Investigation Unit Drug Squad which identified drug dealers in Brookmont Farms with the help of the problem solving team and community leaders. A coordinated arrest plan which included law enforcement personnel from five agencies, Family Service Workers, Animal Control Officers, County Code Inspectors, and low-income housing inspectors led to the eviction of drug dealers living in subsidized housing, the removal of children from unfit homes, and the collection of stray animals. After one year, the County Police reported an overall 23 percent decrease in calls for service, particularly in the categories of assaults, burglary, criminal mischief, and weapons offenses.<sup>9</sup>

**Measures of Progress.** In a 1995 paper submitted to fulfill the requirements of a Masters Degree in Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Delaware, Ms. Jane Vincent reported on the progress that the County had made as of the spring of 1995 in promoting the redevelopment of Brookmont Farms.<sup>10</sup> Ms. Vincent had previously been employed by the New Castle County Department of Community Development and Housing and was responsible for planning the redevelopment initiatives in Brookmont Farms. She based her assessment on the eight goals that had been established in April of 1990 in the Brookmont Farms Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

**Controlling crime.** The County had provided nearly \$300,000 from Community Development Block Grant funds since April 1990 to support two foot patrol officers who were housed first in the temporary community facility and then at the Boys and Girls Club facility. Calls for service and crime rates decreased substantially almost immediately after the officers were assigned to Brookmont Farms but nonetheless it remained the neighborhood with the highest calls for service in suburban New Castle County.

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<sup>8</sup>**Advancing Community Policing**, a proposal from the New Castle County Police to the United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, June 1997.

<sup>9</sup>**Brookmont Farms: Study of a Deteriorated Urban Neighborhood in Suburban New Castle County**, Delaware prepared by Jane C. W. Vincent, Spring 1995. An analytical paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Public Administration, Spring 1995.

<sup>10</sup>**Brookmont Farms: Study of a Deteriorated Urban Neighborhood in Suburban New Castle County**.

***Installing a temporary community facility.*** A mobile home was installed in the open space at the entrance to the neighborhood in April of 1990 with operating and renovation costs of approximately \$17,000. The facility served as a temporary field office and place for civic meetings and human service and recreational programs until the Boys and Girls Club opened in 1993. The facility was burned out by vandals shortly before it could be moved from the site.

***Constructing a county park.*** New Castle County acquired land at the entrance to Brookmont Farms at a sheriff's sale and completed the construction of the park in 1991 which included a ball field, a basketball court, and play equipment. The park represented the only recreational land within walking distance of Brookmont Farms and continued to be part of the park system administered by the New Castle County Department of Parks and Recreation.

***Employing a community facilitator.*** A staff person was hired in the summer of 1990 whose primary duties were to focus on Brookmont Farms. Unfortunately the individual left the following year and there was a lengthy delay in filling the vacancy. Annual costs for the facilitator were approximately \$65,000.

***Improving housing conditions.*** As of April 1995, the County had assisted in the renovation of 76 houses in Brookmont Farms, 21 of which were owner-occupied. A total of \$550,000 in County funds (Community Development Block Grant, HOME, Rental Rehabilitation funds) was spent, supplemented by another \$500,000 from the state and \$50,000 from the property owners. Another \$300,000 had been set aside for exterior improvements and the County applied for \$240,000 from the Federal Home Loan Bank for renovations.

***Increasing home ownership.*** A November 1994 survey by the County indicated that although property conditions had improved, there was no noticeable improvement in the level of owner-occupancy in Brookmont Farms.

***Creating a coordinating committee.*** From the start of the redevelopment effort, the County created an internal coordinating committee to engage the relevant County departments on a regular basis, to connect County work with residents, to coordinate with other agencies to encourage the delivery of social support services, and to improve transportation to Brookmont Farms residents. The committee functioned on a regular basis and was initially chaired by a representative from the County Executive's Office and later from the Department of Community Development and Housing.

***Preparing a Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan.*** The County undertook extensive efforts to prepare a redevelopment plan that expressed the concerns of residents, government officials and agencies, and social service organizations. After one and one-half years in preparation, the New Castle County Council adopted the plan on September 19, 1991.

***Other redevelopment activities and accomplishments.*** The County supplemented its housing renovation with code enforcement, citing 1,000 code violations since the on-set of the program, primarily for environmental violations. The Brookmont Farms Community Association was re-established in June of 1994 and conducted public hearings on raising dues to cover costs associated with community-wide trash pick-up and open space maintenance. In addition, recreational activities were made available through the new Boys and Girls Club and an additional \$33,000 was raised for play equipment in a new tot lot built by residents on a parcel of open space at the back of the development. It was extensively used but unfortunately plagued by vandals. Community clean-ups also helped to improve the overall appearance of the neighborhood. Finally, transportation issues were addressed through street paving, installation of bus pads and shelters, and investigations of ways to increase bus service for Route 40 residents.

According to the author, at the end of the fourth year of a planned five year redevelopment effort, the County proposed continuing the effort for an additional three years.<sup>11</sup> Continued housing rehabilitation and rental housing code inspections were primary among the planned activities for the final phase of the program. The County also planned to continue to address the home ownership issue through home ownership counseling involving nonprofit housing organizations, seeking additional financial support, encouraging participation in housing support programs, and working with local lenders. Open space also needed further attention and the County hoped to assist the Brookmont Farms Community Association establish a community development corporation to raise funds for landscaping and to finalize the sheriff sale process related to open space in the neighborhood.

The author concluded that the redevelopment effort in Brookmont Farms had mixed results in its first four years.<sup>12</sup> While nearly 15 percent of the houses had been renovated, recreations facilities were built and police presence increased, home ownership remained low, crime continued to be a problem, and community participation was largely due to the dedicated

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<sup>11</sup>Brookmont Farms: Study of a Deteriorated Urban Neighborhood in Suburban New Castle County, Delaware, p. 74.

<sup>12</sup>Brookmont Farms: Study of a Deteriorated Urban Neighborhood in Suburban New Castle County, Delaware, pp. 75-77.

efforts of a few individuals. Significant discontinuities in the staffing of the Brookmont Farms project had caused delay in some of the most critical activities and leadership changes in the County left the staff charged with the implementation of activities in Brookmont Farms without broad-based support to pull in resources from various County departments.

**Involvement of Public and Nonprofit Agencies.** In addition to the Boys and Girls Club and the New Castle County Departments of Police and Community Development and Housing, many other public, private and nonprofit agencies contributed resources to the effort to improve the Brookmont Farms neighborhood. For example, Child, Inc. established a family resource center on Flamingo Drive; students at the Hodgson Vocational High School took on the task of building a 1800 square foot community center with materials and technical support provided by the Associated Builders and Contractors and engineering and architectural drawings supplied by Architect Studios; the Delaware Master Gardeners assisted the Brookmont Community to develop a community garden; Chesapeake Bay Girl Scouts enrolled neighborhood girls in summer camp and other programs; the New Castle County Community Partnership created substance abuse programs for youth; and the University of Delaware's Cooperative Extension obtained a grant to set up family stabilization and safety programs in the community.

**Community Policing Grant.** In June of 1997, the New Castle County Police Department submitted a proposal to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services of the U.S. Department of Justice for a grant to advance community policing in the County. A major component of the proposed initiative was to create a demonstration project in Brookmont Farms that would encourage residents to develop a self-policing community.<sup>13</sup>

**Neighborhood in Turmoil.** In the summer of 1998, Brookmont Farms received a significant amount of negative attention in the media because of a continued high rate of crime and drug dealing and a threat from the New Castle County Executive, Thomas Gordon, to solve the problems of the neighborhood by buying out the property, demolishing the homes and relocating the residents. The negative publicity began when the Wilmington News Journal reported that three teenagers had assaulted a county housing inspector as he checked on a house being renovated for resale as part of the county's Affordable Housing Program. On June 17, 1998, the News Journal editorial described Brookmont Farms as "a notorious suburban slum, rife with crime."<sup>14</sup>

Concern developed in 1998 at the top levels of the County administration about the use of federal, state and county funds to rehabilitate houses in Brookmont Farms. County Executive

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<sup>13</sup>Advancing Community Policing application from the New Castle County Police to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services of the United States Department of Justice, June 27, 1997. See section on Community Policing for a further discussion of this initiative.

<sup>14</sup>Wilmington News Journal, June 17, 1998, page A10.

## **Brookmont Farms: A Case Study**

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Gordon believed that the funds had been largely wasted.<sup>15</sup> The News Journal reported on June 22, 1998 that despite \$1.3 million spent over a period of seven years, the County's program, which was aimed at improving owner occupation, owner occupancy had dropped from 44 percent in 1990 to 25 percent in 1998.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, more than 70 percent of the money had gone to landlords and investigators had found extensive evidence of mismanagement with lax enforcement of regulations, no follow-up inspections, and little supervision by top management. Some landlords got loans without filling out required paperwork including documents that barred them from employing companies in which they had an interest. Roughly half of the County money (\$729,000), which was flow through dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), was handed out for cosmetic improvements such as new siding, gutters, and shutters. Although County officials had assured HUD that the program would increase home ownership, it had the opposite effect because the program provided forgiveness loans, so named because after the beneficiary holds onto the improved property for a set period of time—from five to ten years--the debt is forgiven, effectively turning the loan into a grant. The remaining funds (\$572,000), from a state program, were loaned out at three percent interest for more extensive rehabilitation (electrical, plumbing work, etc) and had to be repaid in 10 years.<sup>17</sup> Both programs created incentives to hold on to the property until the time elapsed for payback of the County funds and to avoid paying back the low-interest State loans if the property was sold. Furthermore, most of the taxpayer money went to two landlords—one with 97 units renovated 50 units using \$572,000 or nearly half of the \$1.3 million.

These circumstances prompted County Executive to announce that he was considering three drastic options for Brookmont Farms:

- to reduce the number of homes in Brookmont Farms from 550 to about 300 of the most salvageable dwellings to increase home ownership and reduce federally funded Section 8 housing, most owned by absentee investors;
- to tear it down and rebuild to meet the new County Unified Development Code; or,
- to find other homes for all the residents and raze the entire development, leaving parkland.<sup>18</sup>

The proposed razing of the development prompted complaints from residents who said that Gordon's statement ruined the value of their property and housing expects expressed doubt that the residents of Brookmont Farms could find homes elsewhere. Professor Steven Peuquet, a

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<sup>15</sup>Wilmington News Journal, June 13, 1998, page A1.

<sup>16</sup>Wilmington News Journal, June 22, 1998, page A1.

<sup>17</sup>Wilmington News Journal, June 22, 1998, page A5.

<sup>18</sup>Wilmington News Journal, editorial, June 16, 1998.

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member of the University of Delaware's Center for Community Development and Family Policy, said that bulldozing Brookmont Farms would force hundreds of low-income residents into a tight New Castle County housing market. "It is only going to add to the size of the inadequate housing stock and increase the number of people who have a hard time paying their rent".<sup>19</sup> He cited a 1996 state housing study that estimated that the county needs 500 more affordable apartments by 2000 to meet the growing demand from households earning less than \$15,000 per year.

While the controversy about the future of Brookmont Farms proceeded, County police made Brookmont Farms the focus of a crime prevention task force.<sup>20</sup> Twelve officers regularly patrolled the neighborhood and in the first three weeks made 21 drug arrests, 41 arrests for various other felonies and issued nearly 150 tickets for moving violations along with 110 citations for expired drivers licenses or unregistered cars. The project gave the police insight into the community's problems. On a Friday night, at a four-hour sobriety check point at the entrance to Brookmont Farms, it was found that 743 cars entering the neighborhood were mostly driven by nonresidents. According to Patrolman Chuck Twadowski, "they say that they've got family they're visiting but then they can't remember their names".<sup>21</sup>

The task force tried several new strategies including stationing camouflaged officers in the woods surrounding the neighborhood to take notes on drug dealing that occurs when police cars are out of sight. The task force also brought in other agencies to help. County housing officials reviewed the files of problem tenants to see if their subsidized housing certificates could be revoked; probation and parole officers toured the neighborhood to catch curfew violators; and housing code enforcement officials examined decrepit homes for violations. As a result of these efforts, police targeted 20 to 30 houses as generators of much of the neighborhood turmoil, either because of drug sales or the outbreak of sporadic bouts of violence. The occupants of these homes were evicted and others were warned to shape up.

After a month of beefed up patrols in Brookmont Farms, the officers were gradually reassigned to their normal beats and community members were expected to fill the gap by setting up a community watch program through the civic association and major landlords were asked to pledge to evict tenants who break laws.<sup>22</sup>

In early September, the County reported that 223 citations for housing code violations in Brookmont Farms had been issued in 1998—two for every five homes—ranging from junk cars to

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<sup>19</sup>Wilmington News Journal, June 18, 1998, page B1.

<sup>20</sup>Wilmington News Journal, August 10, 1998, page B1.

<sup>21</sup>Wilmington News Journal, August 10, 1998, page B5.

<sup>22</sup>Wilmington News Journal, August 10, 1998, page B5.

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high grass to unsafe building conditions.<sup>23</sup> Many of these citations had been written against property owners who did not live in the community. However, in late October, after vigorous protests about the County Executive's proposal to raze the community, it was reported that a County-contracted inspection of 54 Brookmont Farms homes revealed no major structural defects. After months of uncertainty about the future of Brookmont Farms, County officials indicated that they were prepared to rule out razing the troubled community and were hopeful that the findings would encourage banks to be more willing to provide mortgage money to potential homeowners.<sup>24</sup>

**The Impact of the Boys and Girls Club.** In 1998, a second study was conducted by the University of Delaware's Center for Community Development and Family Policy to assess, after five years of operation, the impact of the Boys and Girls Club on the nearby neighborhoods and to provide information about the current need for programs and services.<sup>25</sup>

The researchers found widespread agreement among community residents, the police, and representatives of social service agencies that the Boys and Girls Club had had a positive to very positive impact on the communities surrounding its facility. Positive evaluation of the Club's impact was highest in Brookmont Farms among the six neighborhoods in the study area and use of the Club's programs and services was highest in Brookmont Farms. Representatives of the school district, agencies and organizations serving the area, and the state and county police departments said that the Club had filled a void in the area by providing adult supervised activities. The police felt that the Club's positive activities had contributed to the low numbers of kids hanging out at the shopping centers and to a decline in the incidence of minor crimes in Brookmont Farms.

Overall, the researchers found that there had been a decline in the number of criminal incidents in the study area between 1991 and 1998. The total number of incidents in the study area as a whole dropped by seven percent from 2,346 in 1991 to 2,179 in 1998. What was particularly striking was the 26 percent decline in the number of incidents in Brookmont Farms (from 1,352 in 1991 to 1,003 in 1998). Furthermore, incidents in Brookmont Farms dropped from 58 percent of all the incidents occurring in the study area in 1991 to 46 percent in 1998.

On a less positive note, it was found that the academic performance of students in the study area as a whole and in Brookmont Farms had deteriorated somewhat since 1992. On a

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<sup>23</sup>Wilmington News Journal, September 2, 1998, page A11.

<sup>24</sup>Wilmington News Journal, October 26, 1998, page B1.

<sup>25</sup>The Impact of a Boys and Girls Club Facility prepared by Timothy K. Barnekov with the assistance of Vanessa Broadbent, Martha Buell, Maria Pippidis, and Janice Sturgis. Center for Community Development and Family Policy in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service, Northern Delaware Head Start, and the Department of Individual and Family Studies. Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware, September 1999.

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number of measures including absenteeism, suspensions, test scores, class ranking, and special education status, the picture was more bleak in 1998 than it was in 1992.

## **PREVIOUS STUDIES**

Over the last decade, four major studies have been conducted of Brookmont Farms and its surrounding area. These include a Redevelopment Plan prepared by New Castle County's Department of Community Development and Housing in 1991, two studies conducted for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware in 1992 and 1999 by the University of Delaware's Center for Community Development and Family Policy, and a paper satisfying the requirements for a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the University of Delaware's College (now School) of Urban Affairs and Public Policy. This section summarizes the findings of these studies.

### ***Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan - July 1991<sup>26</sup>***

The Redevelopment Plan was prepared by New Castle County's Department of Community Development and Housing with assistance from community residents, other county departments, and various public and private agencies. Its purpose was to help guide the revitalization of the community and to promote neighborhood self-sufficiency.

The study found that in 1990 about half of the properties in Brookmont Farms were in excellent or good condition but another half needed significant improvements. Housing values were low and the common open space remained in the hands of a defunct development corporation so that no entity was responsible for its maintenance. In addition to physical deterioration, the community was isolated from social support services and lacked access to public transportation, employment, recreational opportunities, and retail services. In addition, calls for police service in response to criminal activities was higher in Brookmont Farms than in other suburban neighborhoods.

The recommendations of the Redevelopment Plan were divided into three categories: Essential Activities upon which the success of the Plan were highly dependent, Desirable Activities which would contribute significantly to the successful revitalization of Brookmont Farms and should be undertaken if possible, and Deferrable Activities which, while beneficial to the overall community, would not seriously affect the success of the redevelopment effort.

#### **Essential Activities**

- elimination of major housing code violations;
- rehabilitation of approximately 260 houses in fair and poor condition;
- development of a permanent facility for human and recreation services

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<sup>26</sup>Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan prepared by the New Castle County Department of Community Development and Housing, July 10, 1991.

- deliver;
- increase in the number of owner-occupied units to at least 280;
- re-establishment of the Brookmont Farms Community Association;
- transfer of the ownership of the common open space to the Brookmont Farms Community Association;
- administration of environmental code inspections;
- improvement in public transportation;
- establishment of a Youth Council; and
- continuance of community foot patrol program until neighborhood stability is achieved.

**Desirable Activities**

- conversion of all units to gas heat;
- rehabilitation of all houses;
- establishment of a community development corporation to oversee and undertake long-term improvements;
- installation of play equipment for small children;
- provision of recreational programming for children and youth;
- continued assistance from a "community facilitator" to provide technical assistance, information and referral and assistance in organizing community programs; and
- provision of regular community-wide trash pick-up through the maintenance association.

**Deferrable Activities**

- development of additional play equipment throughout the neighborhood;
- improvement of storm drainage in the common open space; and
- establishment of a regional service delivery facility for the Route 40 corridor.

***The Impact of a Boys and Girls Club Facility - August 1992<sup>27</sup>***

While the Redevelopment Plan was being completed, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware was designing a new facility to be located adjacent to Brookmont Farms. While in the process of raising resources for this facility, representatives of the Boys and Girls Clubs asked the staff of the University of Delaware's Urban Agent Division (now the Center for Community

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<sup>27</sup>**The Impact of a Boys and Girls Club Facility: Baseline Analysis** prepared by Timothy Barnekov, Marjorie Eldridge, and Steven Peuquet. The Urban Agent Division. Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware, August 1992.

Development and Family Policy) to examine the service needs of the area's population to aid the design and implementation of programs at the new facility. Six neighborhoods were selected for study: Brookmont Farms, Greenfield Manor, Glasgow Pines Trailer Court, Glasgow Pines Townhouses, Glasgow Pines Homes, and Glasgow Court Trailer Park.

Four types of information were collected for the purpose of developing baseline data on current conditions and service needs in the target area: (1) adult perceptions about the nature and extent of juvenile problems from a household survey; (2) key informant interviews with local community leaders, police officers, school administrators, and public officials; (3) incidence data on crime, substance abuse, truancy, school dropouts, academic failure, and teenage pregnancy; and (4) demographic data from the 1990 census.

**Demographics.** Reporting data from the 1990 census, the study found that just over 7,500 people lived in the target area of which 78 percent were white and close to 20 percent were African-American. About 2 percent of the population identified themselves as Latino. The black population varied from a high of 46 percent in Brookmont Farms to less than three percent in Glasgow Court Trailer Park. Fully 26 percent of the target area population was between the ages of 25 to 34 which was significantly higher than the proportion of state population in this age group. Not surprisingly, the area had a high proportion of children in the youngest age groups, that is, nine years of age and younger.

**Survey Responses.** In the household survey, respondents were presented with a list of 15 problems with youth and asked whether each was a problem in their neighborhood. Lack of supervision after school, vandalism/disorderly conduct, and crimes involving property such as burglary and theft were most frequently indicated to be neighborhood problems. Brookmont Farms stood considerably apart from the other areas in terms of the proportion of respondents who indicated problems in their neighborhood and this was particularly the case with regard to the use or sale of illegal drugs and violent criminal behavior. Fully 44 percent of the Brookmont Farms respondents said that the use or sale of illegal drugs was the biggest problem in the neighborhood as compared to just 12 percent of all respondents.

A large proportion of the respondents thought that the new Boys and Girls Club facility could contribute to making their neighborhood a better place to live and residents of Brookmont Farms were more likely to indicate that someone in their household would use a program or service of the facility than respondents from other developments in the target area.

**Incidence Data.** The study found that there were 1,345 students in the target area of which two-thirds were white, 29 percent were African-American, and less than four percent were Latino or had other ethnic backgrounds. Just over half of the students from Brookmont Farms were African-American. More than two-thirds of the students from the target area as a whole had at least one characteristic that indicated a risk of academic failure or dropping out and just

over 41 percent had two or more risk factors.<sup>28</sup> Brookmont Farms stood out in terms of the number of students and the number of students at risk. Fully 44 percent of the students from the target area resided in Brookmont Farms but this neighborhood housed 81 percent of the students on AFDC, 60 percent of the students who had been held back at least one grade, and 61 percent of those who had less than a D+ average. Indeed, 85 percent of the students from Brookmont Farms had one or more risk factors and 60 percent had two or more risk factors.

In 1991, the New Castle County police responded to 2,346 incidents in the target area communities of which 41 percent (971) were incidents of vandalism or disorderly conduct but there were also 287 incidents of burglary or theft, 266 civil disputes, 246 incidents of child abuse or domestic violence, and 219 assaults. Brookmont Farms again stood out in contrast to the rest of the target area. Fully 58 percent of the incidents occurring in 1991 took place in Brookmont Farms. Brookmont Farms accounted for 82 percent of the drug and alcohol incidents, 62 percent of the civil disputes, 61 percent of the incidents of child abuse or domestic violence, nearly 60 percent of the cases of vandalism and disorderly conduct, and 55 percent of the assaults.

The 1992 study also showed that a high proportion of the families in Brookmont Farms were receiving public assistance and food stamps in October of 1991. Fully 158 (69 percent) of the 228 families residing in the target area receiving public assistance and 183 (63 percent) of the 289 families receiving food stamps lived in Brookmont Farms.

**Key Informants.** Community leaders, educators, public officials, and political representatives were enthusiastic about the establishment of the Boys and Girls Club facility in the target area. There was consensus that the Club would bring hope to the area and that its structure and institutional setting would encourage residents to participate in programs. Educators felt that parents were genuinely concerned about the performance of their children in school but were unequipped to handle the problems that they were having. Brookmont Farms was particularly singled out as a community that faced obstacles in helping its children. The educators were hopeful that the Boys and Girls Club could satisfy some of the needs of the children and improve their lives as well as their chances for success. In particular, a number of educators indicated that they would very much like the Club to act as a liaison between the community and the schools.

Police officers stated that although all of the communities in the target area faced problems with regard to the supervision of youth, Brookmont Farms had more serious problems and a greater need for police intervention. These problems included school issues (poor performance, truancy, and dropping out) and alcohol and drug abuse. Lack of supervision after

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<sup>28</sup>Defined as being overage for a grade, excessive absence, being suspended or retained, receiving public assistance, failure in two or more subjects, being in the lowest quartile on the Stanford Achievement Test or in class rank, having lower than a D+ average, marking period failure, or special education status.

school led to more serious problems such as vandalism, theft, and fighting. Police officers also worried about the lack of discipline and the structure of family life.

Community leaders felt that the young people lacked supervision and support at home and that this affected their performance in school and promoted truancy and dropping out. These leaders said that there is a lack of supervised programs in the communities and no public transportation so that people had difficulty gaining access to programs outside of the area. Youth were often not able to get help from adults because of the adults' preoccupation with their own overwhelming problems.

***Brookmont Farms: Study of a Deteriorated Urban Neighborhood in Suburban New Castle County, Delaware - Spring 1995<sup>29</sup>***

Jane Vincent, a candidate for a Master's degree in the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Delaware submitted a paper on the Brookmont Farms redevelopment program in the Spring of 1995. Ms. Vincent was especially familiar with the County efforts in Brookmont Farms because she had previously been employed by the New Castle County Department of Community Development and housing and was responsible for planning the redevelopment initiatives in the neighborhood. The thesis examines the ways in which urban problems manifest themselves in a suburban setting and provides a history of the Brookmont Farms development as well as a description of the physical conditions and social environment of the neighborhood. It also summarizes the principal features of the County's Neighborhood Stabilization Program in Brookmont Farms and the Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan.

The principal contribution of the thesis is its review of the progress of the efforts in Brookmont Farms as of the fall of 1994 in controlling crime, creating more open space, improving housing conditions, increasing home ownership, promoting community organization, improving recreation and other services. The author reports mixed results in that while nearly 15 percent of the houses had been renovated, recreation facilities built and police presence increased, home ownership remained low, crime continued to be a problem, and community participation was largely due to the dedicated efforts of a few individuals. She concluded that significant discontinuities in the staffing of the Brookmont Farms project caused delay in some of the most critical activities. Staff changes resulted in a loss of institutional memory about plans that were not specifically incorporated into the Redevelopment Plan and leadership changes left the staff charged with the implementation of activities in Brookmont Farms without broad-based support to pull in resources from the Department of Community Development and Housing or

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<sup>29</sup>**Brookmont Farms: Study of a Deteriorated Urban Neighborhood in Suburban New Castle County, Delaware** prepared by Jane C. W. Vincent. An analytical paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Public Administration, Spring 1995.

from other County departments. The loss of the original Community Facilitator and the delay in replacing the position disrupted efforts to strengthen community organization and weakened the relationship that was being established between the County and the residents.

### ***The Impact of a Boys and Girls Club Facility - September 1999<sup>30</sup>***

A second study was completed by the University of Delaware's Center for Community Development and Family Policy in 1998 as an effort to assess, after six years of operation, the impact of the Boys and Girls Club on Route 40 on the nearby neighborhoods and to provide information about the current need for programs and services. The study partially replicated the study completed in 1992.

The researchers found widespread agreement among community residents, the police, and representatives of social service agencies that the Boys and Girls Club has had a positive to very positive impact on the communities surrounding its facility. Just under 70 percent of the respondents to a survey of community residents conducted in 1998 agreed with this perception. Only six percent believed that the impact had been negative and the remaining 24 percent said that they were unable to make an assessment. Positive evaluation of the Club's impact was highest in Brookmont Farms and lowest in Glasgow Pines Homes. African-Americans were more likely to give the Club a positive evaluation than whites. These patterns were substantially related to the proximity of the Club to the targeted Brookmont Farms neighborhood which has a high proportion of African-American households. Not surprisingly, use of the Club's programs and services was highest in Brookmont Farms. Generally, those who viewed the Club positively said that the Club's most important contribution is that it gives children and youth a place to go where there are positive activities.

Key informants from the school district, from agencies and organizations serving the area, and from the state and county police departments also said that the Club has filled a void in the area by providing adult supervised, structured activities. The positive contributions include giving youth access to after school programs, helping youth to develop computing skills and enhancing self-esteem and personal development. The police felt that the Club's positive activities have contributed to the low numbers of kids hanging out at the shopping centers and to a decline in the incidence of minor crimes in Brookmont Farms.

Swimming, game room activities and after school recreation were the services most

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<sup>30</sup>**The Impact of a Boys and Girls Club Facility** prepared by Timothy K. Barnekov with the assistance of Vanessa Broadbent, Martha Buell, Maria Pippidis, and Janice Sturgis. Center for Community Development and Family Policy in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service, Northern Delaware Head Start, and the Department of Individual and Family Studies. Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware, September 1999.

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utilized and the meal program, after school child care, special interest groups and teen pregnancy prevention were the least utilized. The most highly rated programs were arts and crafts and game room activities but the athletic leagues and computer education were seen as having the most value. It is important to note that school officials and other agency representatives cited the tutoring programs and the after school programs as having a very positive effect and indicated that students are very enthusiastic about the athletic opportunities offered by the Club. A few programs or activities were mentioned as less effective including the summer program because it did not have enough scholarships, the swimming program, and the arts and crafts program. Field trips and special interest groups are said to have the least value.

While the perceptions of service users, community residents, the police, agency representatives, and others knowledgeable about the Boys and Girls Club are important measures of impact, other indicators were also examined. Representatives of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware requested that the researchers obtain data showing trends in the academic performance of students from the study area and trends in the incidence of crime in the neighborhoods to help assess the impact of the facility on these neighborhoods. The researchers pointed out that both the incidence of crime in a community and the performance of its children and youth in school are affected by broad social and economic forces. A direct link between the programs and services of the Club and these social indicators could not be established but the information can assist the Club to develop or expand its programs and services.

Overall, there had been improvement in the number of criminal incidents in the study area between 1991 and 1998. The total number of incidents in the study area as a whole dropped by seven percent from 2,346 in 1991 to 2,179 in 1998. What was particularly striking was the 26 percent decline in the number of incidents in Brookmont Farms. Furthermore, incidents in Brookmont Farms dropped from 58 percent of all the incidents occurring in the study area in 1991 to 46 percent in 1998. At the same time, the number of incidents in Glasgow Court Trailer Park, Glasgow Pines Homes, and Glasgow Pines Trailer Park increased. The researchers noted that the area experiencing the most positive trends in the incidence of crime—that is, Brookmont Farms, where the Club targets its programs and services—was the most troubled area before the Club's facility was opened in 1992. It is also the area where current utilization of the Club's programs is highest. While no definitive conclusions can be drawn, the decline of criminal incidents is probably related both to the presence of the Club and the effort started by the New Castle County Police in late 1996 to implement community policing in Brookmont Farms. The New Castle County Police and the State of Delaware Police credit the Boys and Girls Club with helping to reduce the incidence of minor crimes in the neighborhood and in the surrounding shopping centers.

Academically, children and youth from the study area were described in 1992 by principals and counselors in the Christina School District as performing, on average, more poorly than children and youth from the district as a whole and academic performance data supported

this perception. More than two-thirds of the students had at least one characteristic that indicated a risk of academic failure or dropping out. Brookmont Farms stood out, in particular, in the number of students at risk. Unfortunately, the situation seems to have deteriorated somewhat since 1992. On a number of measures including absenteeism, suspensions, test scores, class ranking, and special education status, the picture is more bleak in 1998 than it was in 1992.

The researchers concluded that the decline in the academic performance of students residing in the study area is related to trends and forces operating in the wider society. Nothing definitive could be said about the effect that the Boys and Girls Club has had on these trends except that the Club's impact has not been sufficient to offset other factors that relate to how well students perform in school. Individual students who have used the Club's tutoring programs may have been helped but their numbers have not been large enough to show an impact on the entire study area. Furthermore, the researchers were unable to determine the extent of decline in academic performance that would have occurred if the Club's programs had not been available to students residing in the study area.

The researchers felt that the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware should be commended for developing programs and services that positively serve the needs of children and youth residing in the study area neighborhoods. The 1992 study clearly demonstrated that the study area contained a higher proportion of children in the youngest age groups than the state as a whole. It also showed that the residents, community leaders, educators, and public officials felt that the programs and services of the Boys and Girls Club were needed in the area and were enthusiastic about the establishment of a facility. Data from the school system and the law enforcement agencies demonstrated that children and youth in the study area, particularly in Brookmont Farms, were experiencing serious problems in school and were coming into contact with the criminal justice system all too frequently. When the doors of the facility opened in 1993, the flood of applications for membership validated the conclusions of the study and the decision made by the leadership of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware to locate a facility on Route 40.

In the years since 1993, the Club has struggled to meet the needs and demands of children and youth residing in the surrounding neighborhoods. Funding has not been sufficient to meet the actual and potential demand. The athletic programs are rated very highly both by residents and by key informants. The after school programs are also greatly valued and are regarded by many (particularly the key informants) as the most valuable service provided by the Club. There is a feeling, however, that more needs to be done with these programs and that after school educational programs need to be linked more effectively with the athletic programs, including the summer programs.

There is no question that the Boys and Girls Club facility on Route 40 has played a very important role in the community. It is also clear that, with additional resources, there is enormous potential for the Club to make a much greater contribution to improving the quality of

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life of children and youth in the surrounding neighborhoods and to enhancing the prospects for their success as adults. Up to this point, the Club has struggled to meet the demand for its programs and has been unable to do much more than respond to the needs of those who show up at its door. Additional resources are required to enable the Club to assess the impact of its programs on individual students, to expand these programs, especially the educational programs, and to extend its ability to reach out to the community. Local and state government, the school system, the private sector, and funding sources should recognize the contributions made by the Club, take advantage of its presence to build and extend collaborative programs, and assist the Club to acquire the resources it needs to reach its full potential.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Tracking the demographic changes in Brookmont Farms requires some extrapolation of data from the 1990 census because the boundaries of the development are not consistent with the boundaries of a census tract, block group or even block as reported in the 1990 census. Brookmont Farms is located in Census Tract 149.03. Blocks 402, 404 and 405 make up 524, or 96 percent, of the 544 households in the development leaving 20 households in block 101 which also includes a portion of Glasgow Court Trailer Park. For our purposes, the data from blocks 402, 404, and 405 will be used to estimate the characteristics of the residents in the 20 households located in block 101. It should also be noted that the 1990, 1991, 1998 and 2000 surveys used different methodologies, a field survey in 1990, a combination mail and telephone survey in 1991, a random digit dialing telephone survey in 1998, and a mail survey distributed by Brookmont Farms residents in 2000. Despite these differences, we are able to observe some general trends in the changing demographic characteristics of Brookmont Farms households.

### Household Tenure and Vacancies

The 544 townhouses in Brookmont Farms were built in groups of four to six units and marketed as home ownership opportunities for moderate-income families (Map 4)<sup>31</sup> but as indicated in an earlier section, poor construction combined with the economic recession resulted in the abandonment of homes by some lower-income residents.<sup>32</sup> By 1980, fully 44 percent of the units were vacant while 81 percent of the occupied units were owner-occupied (Table 1). Over the decade from 1980 to 1990, investors reduced the number of vacant units so that by 1990 only 49 or 9 percent of the units were vacant but at the same time the proportion of units that were owner-occupied dropped to just 34 percent. The 1998 survey suggests that owner-occupancy has been on the increase since 1990 because 68 percent of the Brookmont Farms residents who were interviewed, using a random digit dialing method, said that they owned their homes.

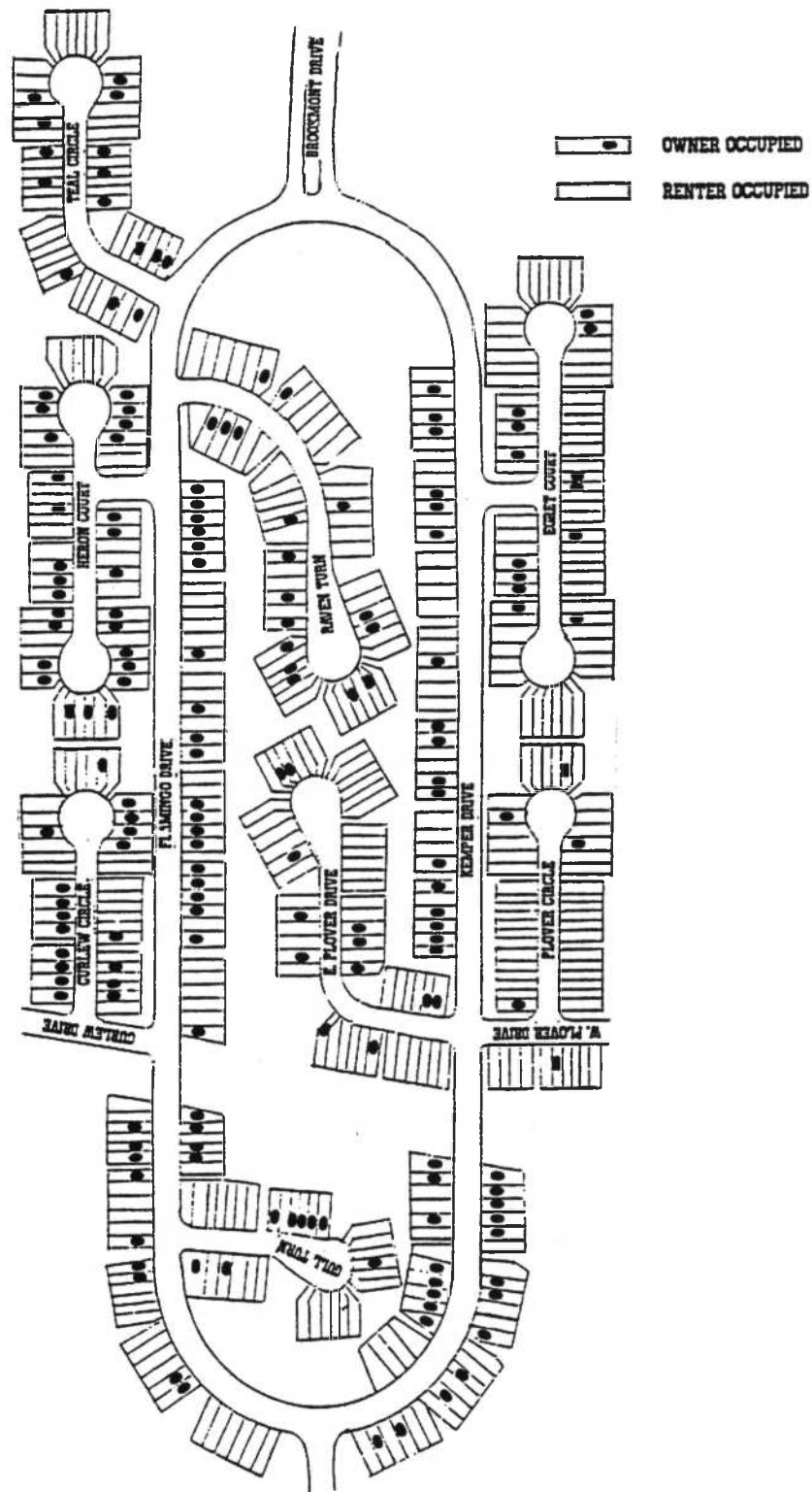
The 1990, 1998, and 2000 surveys also looked at length of residency in Brookmont Farms and all three indicated that throughout the decade of the 1990s there has been a stable core of long-term residents (Table 2). In 1990, 18 percent of the respondents had made Brookmont Farms their home for eleven years or more, 18 percent had lived there from six to ten years, 45 percent from one to five years and 19 percent for less than one year. The 1998 and 2000 surveys found an increase in the longer term residents. Residents living in the neighborhood for six years or more increased from 36 percent in 1990 to somewhere between 46 and 60 percent in the 1998

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<sup>31</sup>Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan, page 18.

<sup>32</sup>Brookmont Farms Redevelopment Plan, page 12.

Map 4



to 2000 period.

**Table 1**

**Household Tenure Characteristics**

	1980 Census <sup>33</sup>		1990 Survey <sup>34</sup>		1990 Census <sup>35</sup>		1998 Survey <sup>36</sup>		2000 Survey <sup>37</sup>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Occupied Units</b>	305	56	499	91	514	94	--	--	--	--
<b>Vacant Units</b>	239	44	49	9	30	6	--	--	--	--
<b>Owners</b>	248	81	170	34	195	38	60	68	63	47
<b>Renters</b>	58	19	329	66	319	62	35	32	71	53
<b>Total Units</b>	544	100	548	100	544	--	--	--	--	--

**Table 2**

**Length of Residency**

	1990 Survey	1998 Survey	2000 Survey
<b>Less than 1 year</b>	19%	2%	13%
<b>1 to 5 years</b>	45%	38%	41%
<b>6 to 10 years</b>	18%	26%	12%
<b>11 years or more</b>	18%	34%	34%

<sup>33</sup>1980 Census for Census Tract 149, Block Group 5.

<sup>34</sup>April 1990 Survey by New Castle County.

<sup>35</sup>1990 Census for Census Tract 14903, Blocs 403, 404, 405 and estimate of Brookmont Farms portion of Bloc 101.

<sup>36</sup>1998 survey of residents of six neighborhoods surrounding the Boys and Girls Club. See **The Impact of a Boys and Girls Facility** prepared by Timothy K. Barnekov, et.al., Center for Community Development and Family Policy, University of Delaware, September 1999.

<sup>37</sup>**Community Policing in Brookmont Farms: Perceptions of Residents** prepared by Timothy K. Barnekov and David Rudder, Center for Community Development and Family Policy, University of Delaware, January 2001.

### Population Characteristics

As a result of the growth in the number of vacant units, only 1,388 persons were counted as residing in Brookmont Farms in the 1980 Census (Table 3). By 1990, less than 10 percent of the units were vacant so that the population count rose to 2,085. Average household size increased from 3.72 in 1980 to 4.06 in 1990, substantially higher than the 2.61 average size of a household in New Castle County. The proportion of African-American Households steadily increased from 17 percent in 1980 to 46 percent in 1990 to approximately 50 percent in 1998. Hispanic/Latino households also seemed to be on the increase from two percent in 1990 to between five and eight percent in the 1998 to 2000 period.

**Table 3**  
**Population Characteristics**

	1980 Census	1990 Survey	1990 Census	1998 Survey	2000 Survey
<b>Total Persons</b>	1,388	2,120	2,085	--	--
<b>White Persons</b>	--	--	50%	--	--
<b>African-American Persons</b>	--	--	46%	--	--
<b>Hispanic Persons</b>	--	--	5%	--	--
<b>Other Persons</b>	--	--	4%	--	--
<b>White Households</b>	81%	50%	--	43%	48%
<b>African-American Households</b>	17%	46%	--	53%	42%
<b>Hispanic Households<sup>38</sup></b>	-	2%	--	5%	8%
<b>Other Households</b>	2%	2%	--	4%	10%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	3.72	--	4.06	--	--

<sup>38</sup>Hispanic households combined with "white" and "African-American" categories.

**Income**

Over the last decade, a significant proportion of the households in Brookmont Farms have had relatively low annual incomes (Table 4). The 1990 survey showed that over 50 percent of the households had incomes of less than \$20,000. While there seems to be somewhat of a decline in the proportion of the households that are very low-income, it must be noted that the figures in Table 4 are not inflation adjusted. With or without adjustment for inflation, it is fair to conclude that while there may be a better mix of income levels among the households in the neighborhood, a considerable proportion of the households remain low-income households.

**Table 4**

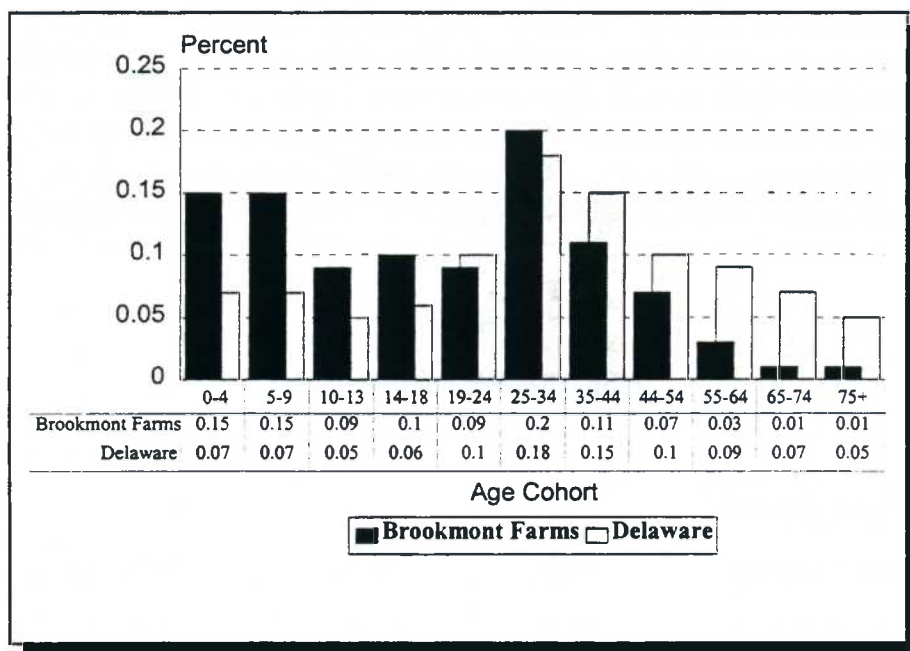
	<b>Household Income</b>		
	<b>1990 Survey</b>	<b>1998 Survey</b>	<b>2000 Survey</b>
Less than \$20,000	53%	37%	28%
\$20,000-\$34,999	30%	31%	28%
\$35,000 and over	17%	32%	44%

**Age Distribution and Presence of Children in the Household**

According to the 1990 Census, fully 49 percent of the residents of the Brookmont Farms neighborhood were 18 years of age or below as compared to only 25 percent of the population of Delaware as a whole (Figure 1). This meant that over 1,000 children and youth resided in Brookmont Farms at the beginning of the 1990s. Over the decade, however, the population in Brookmont Farms seems to have aged. The 1990 Census found that 12 percent of the population in the neighborhood was 45 years of age or older. In the 1991 survey, 28 percent of the respondents were 45 years of age or older. This proportion rose to 34 percent in the 1998 survey and 41 percent in the 2000. Survey (Table 5). While keeping in mind that the survey data is not comparable to the Census data and the methodology of the three surveys differed, it appears nonetheless that there is a higher proportion of older adults in the neighborhood at the end of the decade than at the beginning.

With regard to children in the household, the 1998 survey found that 54 percent of the respondents lived in households with children aged 17 or under. In the 2000 survey, 47 percent of the respondents said that they live in households with children under the age of 10 and 49 percent of the respondents said that they live in households with children between the ages of 10 and 17.

**Figure 1**  
**Age Distribution**



**Table 5**

Age Cohorts					
Age Cohort	1990 Census	1991 Survey	Age Cohort	1998 Survey	2000 Survey
18-24 <sup>39</sup>	9%	5%	18-25	12%	4%
25-34	20%	37%	26-35	23%	22%
35-44	11%	30%	36-45	31%	33%
45-54	7%	18%	46-55	24%	26%
55-54	3%	9%	56-65	4%	10%
65 and older	2%	1%	66 and older	6%	5%

<sup>39</sup>The 1990 Census age cohort was actually 19-24 so the nine percent figure is somewhat lower than the actual proportion of the population in the first cohort depicted in the table.

## **Marital Status**

As Table 6 shows, a significant proportion of the respondents to all of the surveys completed in Brookmont Farms indicated that they were not married (from 50 to 58 percent).

**Table 6**

### **Marital Status of Survey Respondents**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>1991 Survey</b>	<b>1998 Survey</b>	<b>2000 Survey</b>
Married	42%	50%	45%
Divorced/Separated	29%	25%	23%
Widowed	3%	3%	7%
Never married	25%	18%	12%
Unmarried couple	NA	4%	13%

When results of the 2000 survey were analyzed, it was determined that a significant proportion of survey respondents who are not married live in households with children under the age of 18 (Table 7).

**Table 7**

### **Children in Household**

	<b>Under 10</b>		<b>Over 10</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Married/UnMarried Couple	49%	51%	54%	46%
Single	47%	53%	51%	49%

## **Education**

The results of the 1991, 1998, and 2000 surveys indicate that approximately 80 percent of the respondents had a high school education or more (Table 8).

**Table 8**

**Education of Survey Respondents**

<b>Education</b>	<b>1991 Survey</b>	<b>1998 Survey</b>	<b>2000 Survey</b>
Some High School or less	22%	14%	21%
High School/Some College	68%	82%	70%
College/Post Graduate	10%	4%	9%

**Summary**

Currently almost 2,000 people live in Brookmont Farms of which approximately half are African-American and half white. Just over five percent of the population identify themselves as Hispanic. Over half of the households have children under the age of 17 and a significant proportion of these children live in single-headed households. About half of the households are headed by an individual who is not married and approximately half of these households contain children under the age of 17. Over the last decade, a significant proportion of the households have had relatively low incomes. The number of vacant units in the neighborhood has declined significantly since 1980 and owner-occupancy has been on the increase from approximately 34 percent in 1990 to perhaps over 50 percent in 2000. Furthermore, throughout the decade of the 1990s, there has been a stable core of long-term residents.

## Community Policing

Prior to 1990, the County Police relied on a "traditional" style of policing which dictated that the police physically respond to each call for service. It was an "incident-driven" approach which put increasing strain on the resources of the police because of the rise in the number of requests for service through the 911 system. During the period between 1980 and 1990, there was an annual increase of seven percent in the calls for service.<sup>40</sup> "Essentially, the demands of the 911 System were completely bankrupting the organization...officers were running from complaint to complaint and accomplished little."<sup>41</sup> Police Chief Thomas P. Gordon determined that a new way of conducting business had to be developed because:

- the rise in calls for service was causing a log jam of complaints, resulting in delays in response to requests for service and dissatisfaction in the quality of services provided;
- the rise in calls for service required more police officers with advanced training and the attendant costs associated with hiring and training these officers was inflating the operating budget; and
- officers were relegated to the status of report takers, providing little in the way of public value and were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the services they were providing.<sup>42</sup>

A number of changes were introduced to counteract these trends. The agency began tailoring its services to the needs of its customers rather than telling them what the organization was willing to provide. It adopted a "geographical ownership" concept by designating selected areas of the jurisdiction for innovative approaches. Three areas were chosen representing a wide range of socio-economic characteristics including a subsidized housing development (Brookmont Farms), a middle-income working class area, and an affluent area. Officers were assigned to work exclusively in these areas and during the course of the effort, police sub-stations were established in each area to highlight police presence. Foot patrols, mounted patrols, bicycle patrols, and motorcycle patrols, in addition to vehicle patrols were introduced. Officers were required to interact with community leaders by attending community events and meetings and were held accountable for community interaction through a "Community Contact Program".<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Advancing Community Policing*, a proposal from the New Castle County Police to the United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, June 1997, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Advancing Community Policing*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> *Advancing Community Policing*, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Advancing Community Policing*, pp. 3-4, 14. Every officer was responsible for interacting each month with leaders in their assigned area and report concerns on a document called a "Community Contact Form" which

**Early Steps Toward Community Oriented Policing.** Brookmont Farms was the first development in New Castle County to benefit Police Chief Gordon's community policing initiative. The reputation of Brookmont Farms as a place plagued by crime and drugs led the New Castle County Police in May of 1990 to start the first community foot patrol program in suburban New Castle County by assigning a full-time problem solving team of two police officers to Brookmont Farms to answer calls for service and to experiment with intervention techniques.<sup>44</sup> The officers assigned to Brookmont Farms were housed initially in a temporary community facility but when the Boys and Girls Club opened they moved to an office in that facility. The expectation was that the officers would become a routine presence in the neighborhood. They would get to know the residents on a personal basis and be better able to respond to criminal complaints. With support from community leaders, the County's Criminal Investigation Unit Drug Squad and a coordinated arrest plan which included law enforcement personnel from five agencies, drug dealers were identified and arrested. This effort along with the support of Family Service Workers, Animal Control Officers, County Code Inspectors, and low-income housing inspectors led to the eviction of drug dealers living in subsidized housing, the removal of children from unfit homes, and the collection of stray animals. After one year, the County Police reported an overall 23 percent decrease in calls for service, particularly in the categories of assaults, burglary, criminal mischief, and weapons offenses.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless Brookmont Farms remained the neighborhood with the highest calls for service in suburban New Castle County.

### **Community Policing Grant**

In June of 1997, the New Castle County Police submitted a proposal to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services of the U.S. Department of Justice for a grant to advance community policing in the County. In the application, it was asserted that the County Police had been successful in its community policing experiment because the lower income area realized a 60 percent reduction in requests for additional police services, the middle- and upper-income areas increased their interaction with the police department, and the officers assigned to these experimental areas reported a high degree of job satisfaction.<sup>46</sup>

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was designed to capture any problems or concerns in the community. Once problems were identified, it was the responsibility of the police officer and the Community Policing Executive Officer to develop a solution. The police officer was then required to follow through until the situation was rectified.

<sup>44</sup>Advancing Community Policing, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup>Brookmont Farms: Study of a Deteriorated Urban Neighborhood in Suburban New Castle County, Delaware prepared by Jane C. W. Vincent, Spring 1995. An analytical paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Public Administration, Spring 1995.

<sup>46</sup>Advancing Community Policing, p. 4.

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It was claimed that the agency had been restructured to accommodate a community-based philosophy. Federal funds were being requested to achieve the following goals:

- use the current level of knowledge and experience in community policing to launch innovative strategies;
- create a demonstration project in Brookmont Farms to enable residents to take ownership and develop a self-policing community; and
- combine the current knowledge and experience with the knowledge gained from the Brookmont Farms endeavor to create a "Model Community Policing Center" that will become the educational arm of the agency and a repository of up-to-date community policing techniques that will be available to other law enforcement entities.<sup>47</sup>

As part of the project, the County Police anticipated assigning two police officers to work in Brookmont Farms as a problem-solving team, a strategy that had been utilized earlier in the decade. Three police instructors would be hired to develop ideas and create a community policing curriculum and be available to other police agencies to communicate the lessons learned in the demonstration project. The Center would host classes and seminars in community policing and problem-solving techniques and provide participants with real-life scenarios and up-to-date policing techniques. It would also create audio/visual presentations for use in instruction around the country. The County Police also intended to hire a civilian coordinator, a civilian Housing Financial Advisor, and two clerical staff. All of these positions would support the demonstration project and the teaching functions of the Model Community Policing Center.

Within Brookmont Farms, the County Police proposed creating a Residential Advisory Board that would be a cooperative effort between landlords, residents, and the police. The board would interview perspective residents of Brookmont Farms, determine rules and regulations for the community and have the power to impose sanctions on those who do not comply, including eviction. The Housing Financial Advisor, working out of the County Department of Community Development and Housing, would advise the Residential Advisory Board on rentals and evictions and identify resources available for home improvements. Finally, a subsidized day-care/preschool would be constructed with money from the grant.

The statement about the objectives of the grant concluded by saying that "ultimately, the residents of Brookmont Farms will gain a sense of 'ownership' for their community. The drug pushers and troublemakers will be evicted and hard-working citizens will regain control of Brookmont Farms."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Advancing Community Policing*, Project Summary.

<sup>48</sup> *Advancing Community Policing*, p. 22.

## **Implementation of the Community Policing Grant**

By the time the Community Policing Grant had been awarded and implemented, much of the strategy used in Brookmont Farms had already been tested. New Castle County patrolmen Robert Norris and Hugh Ferrill, both University of Delaware graduates, had been assigned to foot patrol at Brookmont Farms since September 1996. The grant allowed the New Castle County Police to continue to assign two patrol officers to the neighborhood, support the foot patrols, and engage in collaborations with a variety of public and private agencies for purpose of ensuring that residents who violated the housing codes and/or conditions of parole were evicted from the neighborhood.

The new initiative was, in a sense, reinforced by negative media attention in the summer of 1998 reporting a continued high rate of crime and drug dealing in Brookmont Farms. As a result, in the latter part of July and in early August, County police made Brookmont Farms the focus of a crime prevention task force.<sup>49</sup> Twelve officers regularly patrolled the neighborhood and in the first three weeks made 21 drug arrests, 41 arrests for various other felonies and issued nearly 150 tickets for moving violations along with 110 citations for expired drivers licenses or unregistered cars. In the process, police gained greater insight into the problems of the community.

The task force tried several new strategies including stationing camouflaged officers in the woods surrounding the neighborhood to take notes on drug dealing that occurs when police cars are out of sight. County housing officials reviewed the files of problem tenants to see if their subsidized housing certificates could be revoked; probation and parole officers toured the neighborhood to catch curfew violators; and housing code enforcement officials examined decrepit homes for violations. The outcome of these efforts was that police targeted 20 to 30 houses as generators of much of the neighborhood turmoil, either because of drug sales or the outbreak of sporadic bouts of violence. The occupants of these homes were evicted and others were warned to shape up.

After a month of beefed up patrols in Brookmont Farms, the officers were gradually reassigned to their normal beats and community members were expected to fill the gap by setting up a community watch program through the civic association and major landlords were asked to pledge to evict tenants who break laws.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Wilmington News Journal, August 10, 1998, page B1.

<sup>50</sup>Wilmington News Journal, August 10, 1998, page B5.

## **The Objectives of the Community Policing Initiative in Brookmont Farms**

The initiatives in Brookmont Farms were designed to provide a “demonstrative” learning environment for the New Castle County Police Department and to inform the process of creating a “Model Community Policing Center.” Traditional policing had proved ineffectual due to the rise in the calls for service where each complaint was treated as a singular event without concerns for the context in which it occurred, factors which led to its occurrence, or its implications for the future. Responses to the event often became ineffectual “report taking” missions which did not enhance the police force’s knowledge or understanding of the community.

The initiative in Brookmont Farms was intended to develop a style of policing that would be more accountable to citizens and, as well, to encourage a sense of responsibility to the community on the part of the officers. In the process, the police would learn more about the citizens they served and citizens would be provided an opportunity to offer advice on how services could be improved. Residents would be encouraged to “take ownership” of the community and develop a “self-policing” community. The initiative was also aimed at making more efficient use of human resources, that is, the police officers. A more pro-active approach to law enforcement would systematically accumulate and utilize knowledge of specific communities and, it was hoped, lead to a system that would tailor responses to individual circumstances.

Brookmont Farms was chosen as the demonstration site because the neighborhood consumed large amounts of government services, particularly police services. Its “open air” drug trade had achieved significant notoriety and the large percentage of absentee landlords inhibited the development of a sense of community.

Officers assigned to the neighborhood defined community policing as a partnership between the residents of the community and the police department.<sup>51</sup>

“It’s pro-active, not reactive. You don’t just try to suppress trouble. In traditional policing, you figure there’s nothing wrong until it becomes obvious that there is. By that time, the damage has usually been done. The way we do it is we find out what’s going on, you know, we talk to people.”

“Well, traditionally, there’s some kind of disturbance, someone hanging out on the corner and making noise, and police come and chase them away. A little while later, they’re

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<sup>51</sup>The following is a summary of interviews with officers assigned to Brookmont Farms which was conducted by a member of the staff of the Center for Community Development and Family Policy and took place on March 14, 2000 and May 5, 2000.

back again, the police come again. Maybe you arrest them if they're doing something, but it doesn't do any good. It's the whole thing, the prisons don't reform people. What we do is go in and talk to them. Get information, find out where they live, who their parents are. We talk to them about other alternatives to hanging out on the street corner. They gotta have alternatives if you expect them to change their behavior."

"And you have to find out why they're hanging out on that corner. It's a CPTED issue (*pronounced "sighted" and referring to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*). It may be a matter of why they're hanging out on THAT (*emphasized*) corner specifically. Maybe it's a design factor that can be fixed, maybe there's a light out. We may need to work with other agencies to fix that problem."

"You can't solve everything by arresting people. If I see a kid on the street who should be in school, I ask him why he's not. I'll find out where he lives and go talk to his parents. We want a reaction but not necessarily a negative one, you know, but we want to get them thinking. We don't want to just smooth things over. We want to see some change, some positive change."

### **Working with Agencies and Organizations**

An important component of the community policing initiative in Brookmont Farms was the effort to build partnerships with agencies and organizations that provided services to the residents. These included Child, Inc., the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware, the County's Affordable Housing Program, the County Department of Community Development and Housing, the Hodgson Vocational High School, the University of Delaware's Cooperative Extension, and others. The objective was to enlist these organizations in the overall effort to reduce crime in Brookmont Farms, to help individuals find access to services and alternatives that might direct them away from criminal activities, and to encourage these agencies to help improve the relationship between police and residents.

The officers assigned to the neighborhood described the purpose and nature of their work with these agencies <sup>52</sup>:

"We are also trying to provide links for the community to other county services and health related services. Tell them what's available and contact other agencies when they need us to. We're right there. We know the people, so we can talk to them and tell them where to get help. We refer them to places. If there is a kid who's having problems—I don't know, drugs or a dysfunctional family or something—there's lots of organizations

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<sup>52</sup>Interview with officers assigned to Brookmont Farms, March 14, 2000.

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that can help them. They may want to talk to me, but maybe they don't, maybe the uniform turns them off, I can send them to Child Inc. or somewhere else. It may sound corny but we help people carry in their groceries. We talk to people about their concerns, their families."

"Communication is definitely two way. We drop by when we're in the neighborhood. At lot of times, we just see them on the street. But I may go by to take a kid into Child, Inc. If they have anything they're worried about, someone running around or making trouble, they'll call us. They're not afraid to, they know we're here to help people not to throw them in jail."

"The important thing is we need to form partnerships with the community. Once we make those ties, and we're all working toward the same goals, we've got a lot less friction in terms of reaching them. We work with Child, Inc. and Reach, the Brookmont Farms Civic Association, and the Brookmont Farms Task Force. We attend meetings, work with the boards, and work with regional associations as well. We feel very accepted at the meetings. Often we help to put out information from the meetings about upcoming events or fliers. Help to announce things."

### **Working with Landlords and the Section 8 Program**

Outraged at the condition of many of the units in Brookmont Farms, the officers started taking Polaroid photographs of the worst ones and worked with representatives of the Section 8 Program to pressure landlords to clean up their properties.

"We also work with the landlords. They have a vested interest in the neighborhood, they don't want to see property values go down. But we need to confront as well as work with the landlords. We ask why is this property in such bad shape? We have the Disorderly Premises Law so we can arrest landlords if their premises are continuously problematic. Often problems are beyond their control, or they think they are. They need linkages and assurances if you expect them to put money into their property. The New Castle County Police Department helped to form a resident advisory board to create and enforce contracts between tenants and owners. We encourage them to check out references. We can't tell them that that person has been in trouble, if you rent to them it going to be trouble. But we can say that it's probably not a good idea and remind them of their responsibilities as a landlord. The landlords have been a really valuable asset in identifying the problems in the area and how to solve them."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Interview with officers assigned to Brookmont Farms, March 14, 2000.

The family obligation guidelines of the Section 8 received greater enforcement. These guidelines say that a Public Housing Authority may deny assistance to an applicant or terminate assistance to a participant family if any member of the family commits either drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the Authority may deny or terminate assistance if the preponderance of evidence indicates that a family member has engaged in such activity regardless of whether the family member has been arrested or convicted. Greater enforcement of these regulations led to 100 terminations of assistance to Section 8 residents in Brookmont Farms in 1997.<sup>55</sup>

### **Assessment of Community Policing: Perspective of the Social Service Worker**

In order to obtain the perspectives of agency representatives about the community policing effort, several interviews were conducted with individuals who work for these organizations in Brookmont Farms.<sup>56</sup>

"There had been some bad blood between the police and the residents in the past but the 'new crew' were more family friendly and were really reaching out. They aren't here just to enforce. You have to understand that this neighborhood was drug infested, so I guess that they had to be a little hard-nosed in the beginning. But now that things are a bit better, they can send in the nice guys. They knew what they needed to do in the beginning, and then they switched gears."

"They had question and answer session with the community to try to find out what the community wanted from them and to tell them what they expected from the community. They gave away turkeys on Thanksgiving and worked with children on registering bikes and issuing identification cards."

"They helped with parents a lot in finding solutions to discipline problems that they're having with their kids. The parents are often scared to act because they're afraid of the kids themselves but often because they're afraid that their child will accuse them of abuse if they discipline them. By having the officers behind them, it helps them. Sometimes the kids refuse to go to school and the police have told people that if they do 'call us, we'll take them to school.'"

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<sup>54</sup>HDR RF-66, Section 982.553.

<sup>55</sup>Presentation on Successful Community Policing, New Castle County Police Department, May 1, 2000.

<sup>56</sup>A summary of interviews with representatives of agencies which serve Brookmont Farms, conducted by a member of the staff of the Center for Community Development and Family Policy and took place on April 18, 2000.

"There had been a case where an officer, not one of the 'two', had responded to a call about a troublesome teenager. A local community leader heard the interaction between the officer and the youth and went outside to find out what was going on. The officer told her to go inside. The woman went on to tell the officer about her role in the community and to say that she was concerned. The officer responded: 'I don't give a damn who you are, get in your house and mind your own business.' If it had been one of the 'two', it would have been different. He would probably have still told her to go inside, but he would have been polite and would have told her that he would come and tell what happened later on."

"There's a big difference between them—the two sweetheart policemen who come in and help—and the others. The two are non-threatening. They stop by peoples' homes and talk to them with respect. They don't come in with a judgmental attitude because they have earned respect from the people and they don't need to get abused by the people because they know how to deal with them."

[She gives an example of a domestic dispute that she witnessed.] "An officer responded but was not one of the two. The residents began by talking to the police as if they were the two but the police responded in a cold way and acted like they just wanted to get out of there. By the end, the residents were just yelling at the officers. This wouldn't have happened if it had been one of the two because they know people's backgrounds. If someone raises their voice, they know how to make them stop."

"Well I can't say enough good about community policing. I mean, the two officers who are here all the time, you'd just have to be here on a daily basis to see what a difference they've made."

### **Assessment of Community Policing: The Police Officer's Point of View**

The officers themselves regarded community policing as an effective way to reduce crime in a troubled neighborhood and an efficient use of resources.<sup>57</sup>

"We're very much a part of the community these days. When we first got there people wouldn't even wave to us. We could wave at them and they'd ignore us or say that they didn't like cops. Now, any cop who goes into that neighborhood is gonna be waved at."

"[Community policing] also provides for a more efficient use of the Department's resources. At first, it's extremely resource intensive but if you just look at that you miss

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<sup>57</sup>Interviews with officers assigned to Brookmont Farms on March 14, 2000 and May 5, 2000.

the bigger picture. In the long run, it really saves on resources because there is less crime to deal with and officers can see things coming before they become a problem. We can deal with it before it reaches a crisis point. Most agencies don't take a long run approach."

"We made some mistakes in the early years. The biggest one was that you can't just move into a community for a while, 'kick ass', and then leave. We thought we solved things. But we can't solve things. Changes made like that don't last. If we really want change things, we have to prove our commitment and work with them [*the residents*] to change things. You have to make a sustained commitment to the neighborhood. But before, like 1995, we just came in and had some big sweep, got great results, and left. But nothing really changed."

## Law Enforcement Data

As shown in Figure 2, County police responded to 1,352 incidents in Brookmont Farms in 1991.<sup>58</sup> Fully 43 percent (574) were incidents of vandalism and disorderly conduct followed by 164 civil disputes (12 percent), 150 incidents of child abuse or domestic violence (11 percent), 127

burglaries (9 percent), 120 assaults (9 percent), and 85 incidents of drug or alcohol abuse (6 percent). By 1999, the number of incidents in the neighborhood had declined by almost half with the biggest decline occurring between 1996 and 1999. In that period, the total number of incidents dropped from 1,362 in 1996 to only 704 in 1999.

Figure 2

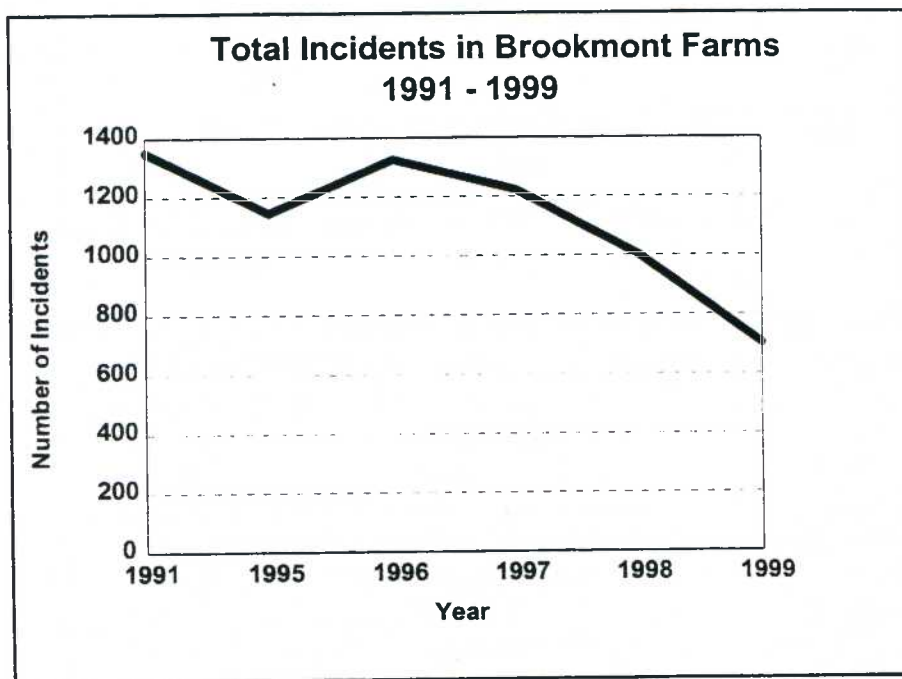
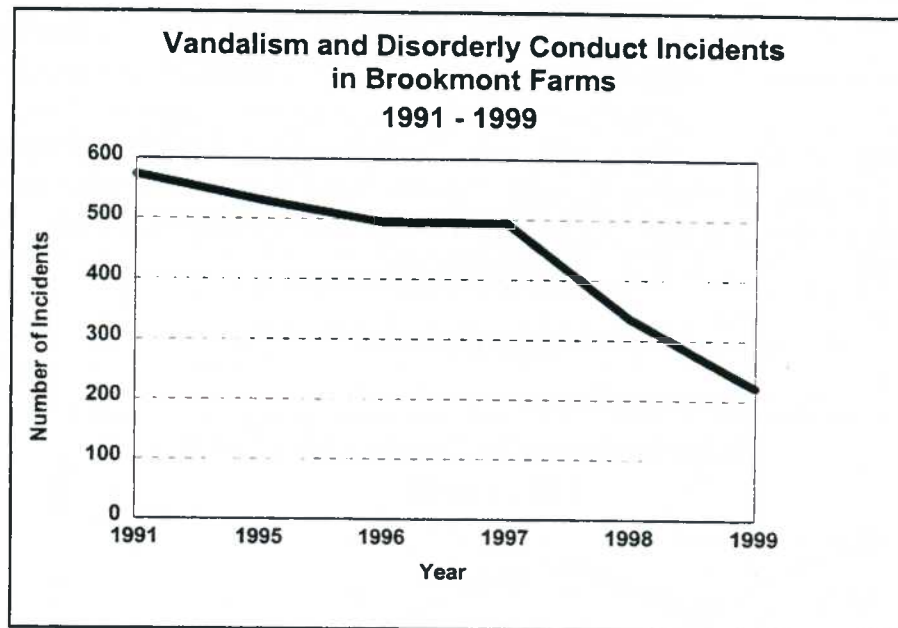


Figure 3 shows that incidents of vandalism and disorderly conduct dropped from 574 in 1991 to 222 in 1999, a decline of 61 percent. The decline was particularly steep after 1997.

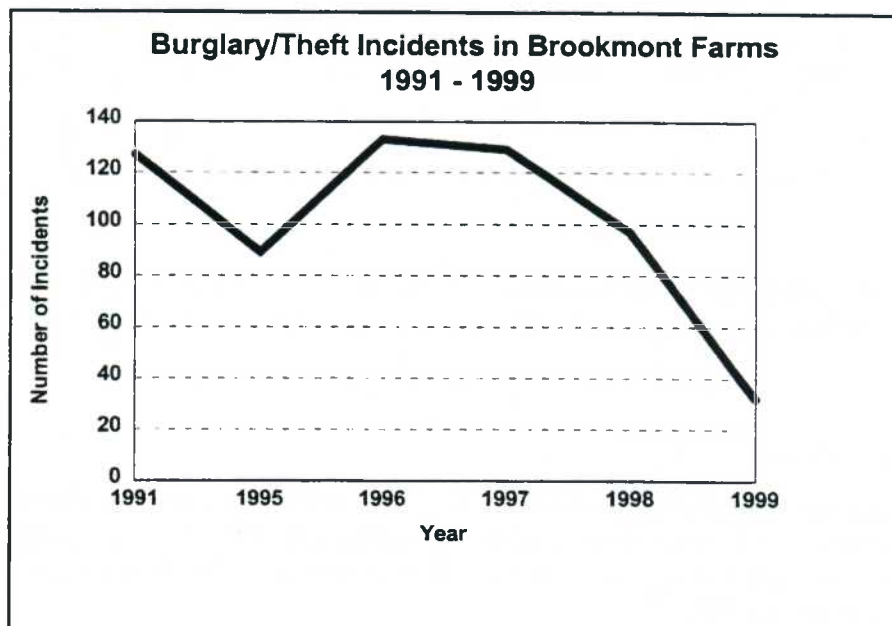
<sup>58</sup>Law enforcement data included in this section were provided by the New Castle County Department of Police. See Table 9 at the end of this section for a complete listing of the types, number and percentage of responses to criminal incidents occurring in Brookmont Farms between 1991 and 1999. Note that data is not available for the years 1992 through 1995.

Figure 3



The number of burglaries or thefts dropped by 75 percent from 127 in 1991 to just 32 in 1999 with, again the most significant decline occurring between 1997 and 1999.

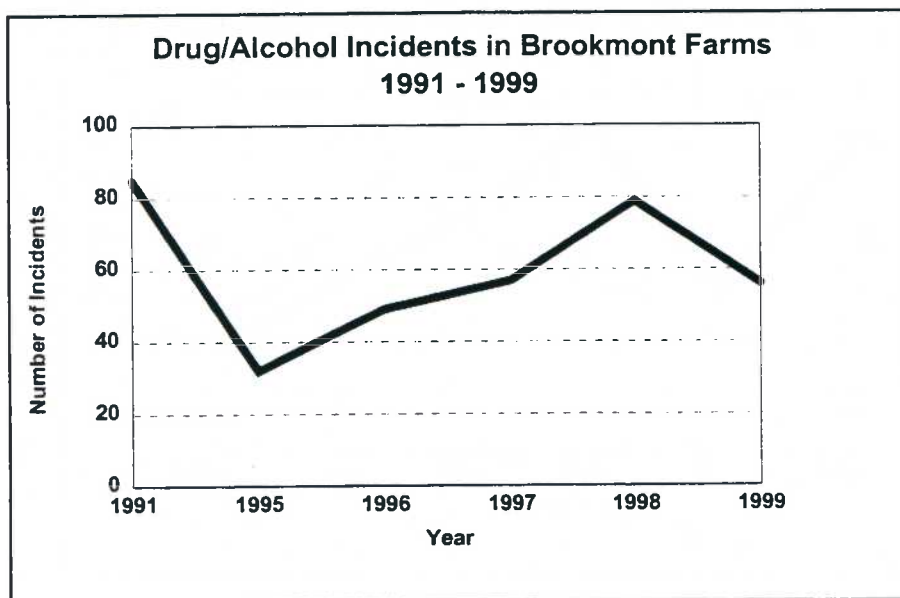
Figure 4



### Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

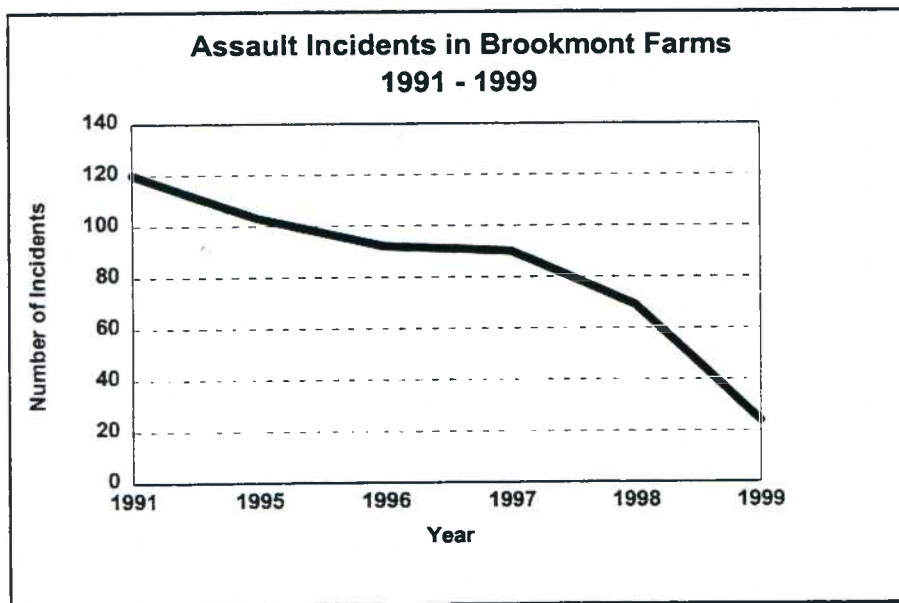
As shown in Figure 5, drug and alcohol incidents declined between 1991 and 1995 but rose again between 1995 and 1998. Between 1991 and 1999, there was an overall decline of 34 percent in the number of drug and alcohol incidents.

Figure 6



Assaults dropped from 120 in 1991 to just 24 in 1999, a decline of 80 percent.

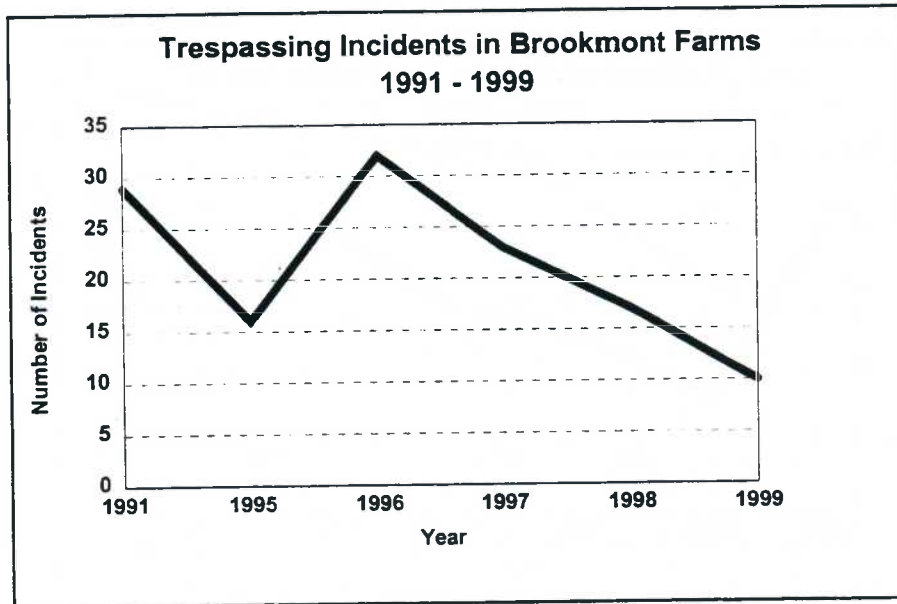
Figure 7



### Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

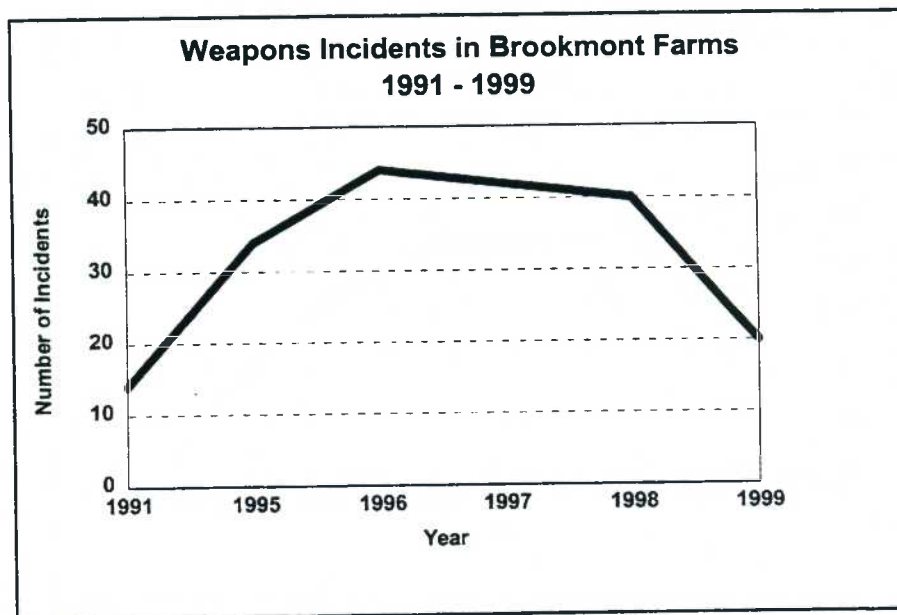
Incidents of trespassing dropped from 29 in 1991 to 10 in 1999, a decline of 66 percent which place primarily after 1996.

**Figure 8**



Incidents relating to weapons, however, increased from 14 in 1991 to 44 in 1996 and then declined to 20 in 1999.

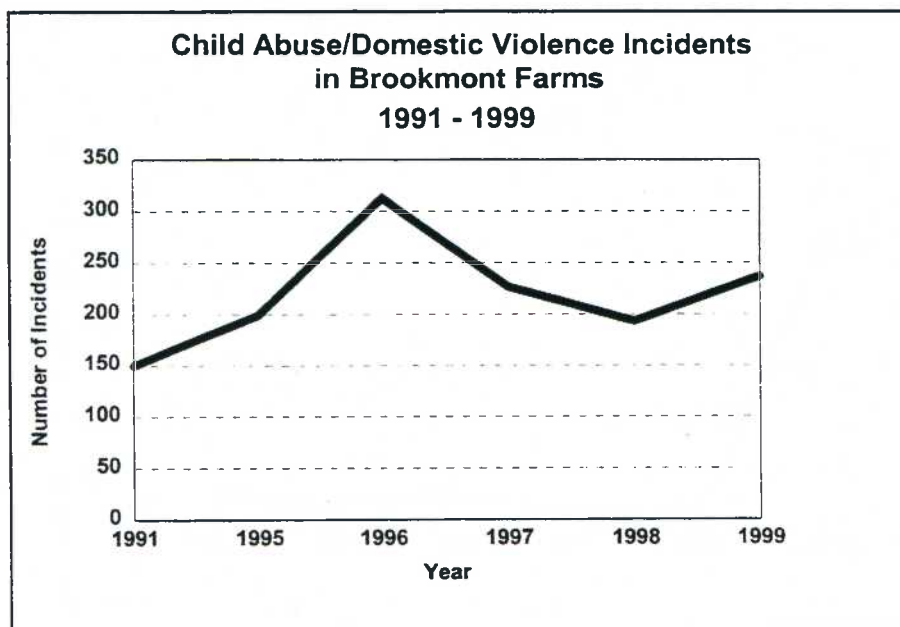
**Figure 9**



## Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

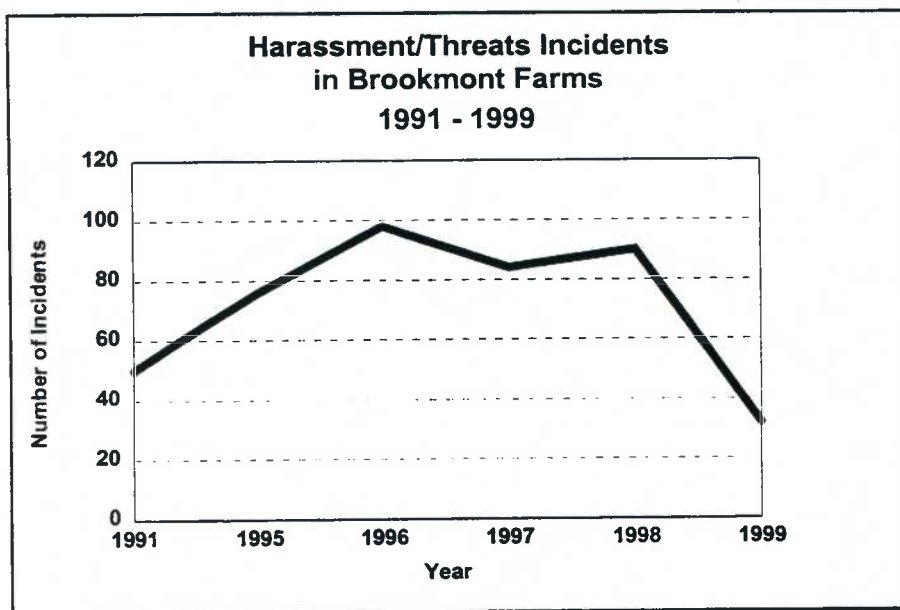
Contrasting significantly with other areas, incidences of child abuse and domestic violence increased substantially from 150 in 1991 to 237 in 1999, an increase of 58 percent.

Figure 10



Incidents of harassment and threats declined 36 percent between 1991 and 1999, from 50 to 32.

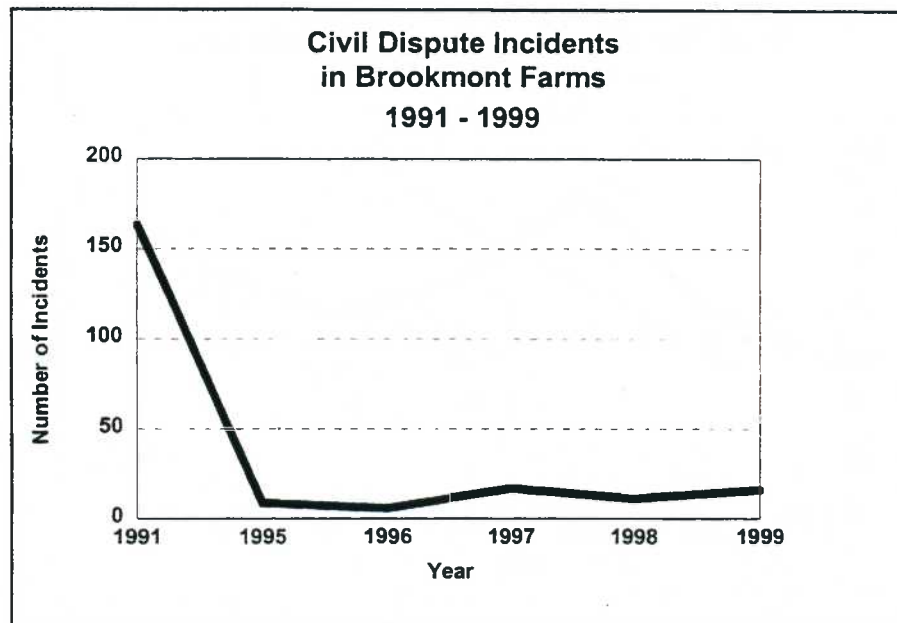
Figure 11



### Brookmont Farms: A Case Study

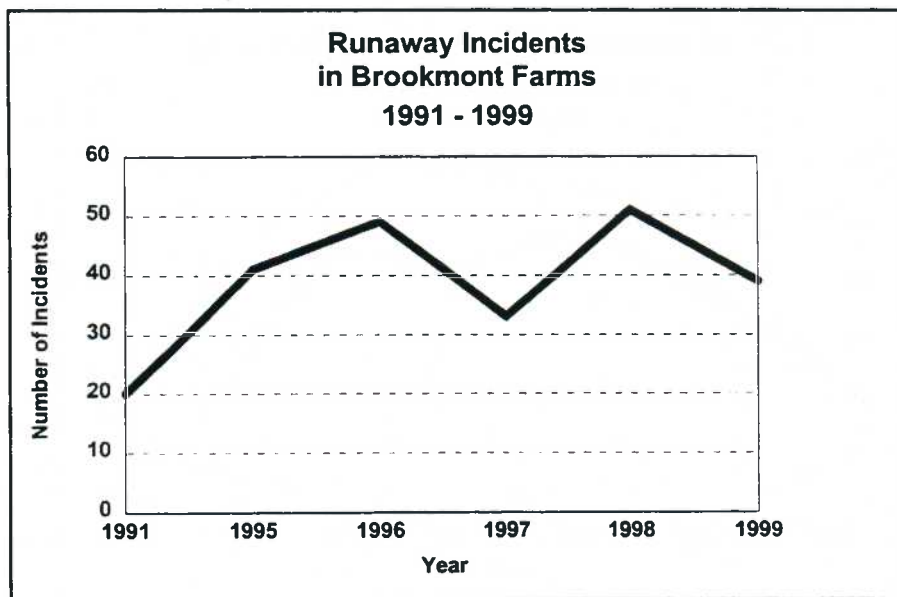
The number of incidents related to civil disputes declined very substantially from 164 to just 16 in 1999 but the bulk of the decline took place between 1991 and 1995.

**Figure 12**



New Castle County Police responded to 39 cases of runaways in 1999 as compared to just 20 in 1991.

**Figure 13**



#### **Brookmont Farms: A Case Study**

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Other response areas include suicides, arson, robbery kidnaping, and rape or sex offenses. The number of incidents in each of these categories were too small to allow for a meaningful calculation of change.

Table 9 on the following page provides specific information of the number of incidents which the New Castle County Police responded to in the years 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999. Response data is not available for the years 1992, 1993, and 1994.

Table 9  
Law Enforcement Data: 1991-1999

Incidents	1991		1995		1996		1997		1998		1999		% Change
Vandalism/Disorderly Conduct	574	42.5%	531	46.4%	495	37.3%	494	40.4%	336	33.5%	222	31.5%	-61.3%
Burglary/Thefts	127	9.4%	89	7.8%	133	10.0%	129	10.5%	97	9.7%	32	4.5%	-74.8%
Drugs/Alcohol	85	6.3%	32	2.8%	49	3.7%	57	4.7%	79	7.9%	56	8.0%	-34.1%
Assaults	120	8.9%	103	9.0%	92	6.9%	90	7.4%	69	6.9%	24	3.4%	-80.0%
Trespassing	29	2.1%	16	1.4%	32	2.4%	23	1.9%	17	1.7%	10	1.4%	-65.5%
Weapons	14	1.0%	34	3.0%	44	3.3%	42	3.4%	40	4.0%	20	2.8%	42.9%
Child Abuse/Domestic Violence	150	11.1%	199	17.4%	313	23.6%	227	18.6%	193	19.2%	237	33.7%	58.0%
Harassment/Threats	50	3.7%	76	6.6%	98	7.4%	84	6.9%	90	9.0%	32	4.5%	-36.0%
Civil Disputes	164	12.1%	9	0.8%	6	0.5%	17	1.4%	11	1.1%	16	2.3%	-90.2%
Suicides*	3	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0.3%	1	0.1%	NA
Runaways	20	1.5%	41	3.6%	49	3.7%	33	2.7%	51	5.1%	39	5.5%	95.0%
Arson*	7	0.5%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	NA
Robbery*	3	0.2%	10	0.9%	7	0.5%	12	1.0%	7	0.7%	6	0.9%	NA
Kidnaping*	3	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	NA
Rape/Sex Offenses*	3	0.2%	5	0.4%	7	0.5%	15	1.2%	9	0.9%	8	1.1%	NA
<b>Total</b>	<b>1352</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1145</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1326</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1223</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-47.9%</b>

\* The % Change calculation is not applicable to these categories because the numbers of incidents are too small to allow for meaningful calculation of change.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF RESIDENTS**

In the spring of 2000, the University of Delaware's Center for Community Development and Family Policy contracted with the New Castle County Department of Police for the completion of a survey of the residents of Brookmont Farms relating to issues of crime and community policing.

Staff of the Center worked with representatives of the Department of Police to design and pretest the survey instrument. Department representatives had an opportunity to review and approve the final survey instrument. In addition, representatives of the Brookmont Farms Civic Association also reviewed the survey instrument and provided comments before the instrument was finalized. About one-quarter of the 544 households located in Brookmont Farms completed the survey.<sup>59</sup>

The residents were asked questions about conditions of crime in Brookmont Farms and New Castle County, their feelings of safety in the neighborhood, whether they or a member of their household had been a victim of a crime in Brookmont Farms, their perceptions of police service in Brookmont Farms, their views about the severity of various neighborhood problems, the performance of New Castle County government agencies and services, and demographic characteristics such as age, race, gender, income, whether they were homeowners or renters and length of time in their house

### **Crime and Safety**

Fully 60 percent of the respondents said that conditions related to crime in Brookmont Farms are getting better, almost twice the proportion of respondents (33 percent) who felt that conditions related to crime in New Castle County are getting better. Nonetheless, almost 20 percent of the respondents said that they feel somewhat or very unsafe being out alone in Brookmont Farms during the day and over half (53 percent) feel somewhat or very unsafe being out alone at night. Almost half (46 percent) reported that they feel much more or a little more safe in Brookmont Farms as compared to five years ago. Nearly 40 percent said that they or a member of their household had been a victim of a crime in Brookmont Farms with burglary, theft and robbery, malicious mischief and assault being the most frequently reported crimes. Among those who had been a victim of a crime, about two-thirds (64 percent) said that they had reported all incidents to the police while 17 percent said that they had reported some of the incidents.

Not surprisingly, those who felt that conditions related to crime in Brookmont Farms were getting better were more likely than others to say that they feel safe being out alone during the day or at night in Brookmont Farms, that Brookmont Farms had become a better place to live as compared to five years ago, that violent crimes and street gangs are not significant problems in

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<sup>59</sup> A full report on the results of the survey can be found in **Community Policing in Brookmont Farms. Volume III: Perceptions of Residents** prepared by Timothy Barnekov and David Rudder. Center for Community Development and Family Policy, University of Delaware. January 2001.

the neighborhood, that Brookmont Farms is patrolled satisfactorily and the service provided by the police is excellent or good. They were also more likely to be renters.

Respondents who said that they or a member of their household had been a victim of a crime in Brookmont Farms were more likely to be white, be homeowners, and have lived in the neighborhood for six years or more. They were also more likely to be negative about Brookmont Farms as a place to live as compared to five years ago.

### **Police Service**

Fully 60 percent of the respondents feel that conditions related to crime in Brookmont Farms are getting better. This is a surprisingly high proportion especially when compared with the responses to a similar question asked in the city of Wilmington in 1999.<sup>60</sup> Only 17 percent of the Wilmington respondents said that conditions related to crime in Wilmington were getting better. Sixty percent of the Brookmont Farms respondents also felt that the community is patrolled satisfactorily. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) said that the police have given special attention to Brookmont Farms and almost 83 percent describe the service provided by the police as excellent or good. On the other hand, among those who said that they or a member of their household had been a victim of a crime in Brookmont Farms and reported it to the police, only 28 percent said that they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the police service they received. Among those who said that they or member of their families had not been a victim of a crime in Brookmont Farms, nearly 60 percent indicated that they have had other personal contact with a police officer in their neighborhood and nearly 60 percent of this group rated this contact as very positive or somewhat positive.

While only one-third of the respondents said that they knew any of the officers assigned to the neighborhood, this was a considerably higher proportion than was found among respondents to the survey conducted in Wilmington in 1999 (11 percent). About 18 percent of the respondents could name any of the officers assigned to their neighborhood as compared to just under five percent of the Wilmington. Half of the respondents felt that the foot patrols had made a difference in Brookmont Farms with only 15 percent disagreeing with this assessment. The remainder said that they did not know. More significantly, no one indicated that the foot patrols should be removed from the neighborhood, although just under 20 percent said that they had no opinion on the subject. When asked what they like best about the foot patrols, the most frequent responses were that they improve the policing function and police-resident relationships and they support crime prevention. There were very few negative comments about the foot patrols except that one-quarter of the respondents said that there were not enough of them.

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<sup>60</sup>Crime, Public Safety & Police Service: Changing Perceptions of Wilmington Residents. Prepared by Timothy K. Barnekov, Center for Community Development and Family Policy, University of Delaware, April 2000. Page 11.

Respondents who felt that Brookmont Farms is patrolled satisfactorily were more likely to be positive about feeling safe in the neighborhood, about the neighborhood as a place to live, about the foot patrols, and about whether the police had given the neighborhood special attention. There were less likely to say that dirty streets, drugs being sold on the streets, violent crime, and groups of persons hanging around on the streets were significant problems in Brookmont Farms. In addition, they were more likely to give all of the County agencies an A or B grade for their performance.

Respondents who said that they knew any of the officers assigned to Brookmont Farms were more likely to say that conditions related to crime in Brookmont Farms are getting better; that the police have given special attention to the neighborhood, and that the foot patrols have made a difference. They were also more likely to have children under ten in their household and be white.

### **Neighborhood Problems**

Fully 57 percent of the respondents said that compared to five years ago, Brookmont Farms has become a much better or a little better place to live. Only eight percent felt that it had become a much worse or a little worse place to live. In order to provide a ranking of the severity of neighborhood problems as perceived by the respondents, a summary variable was created to take into account the proportions of respondents who chose one of six options ranging from an extreme problem to not a problem and don't know. Respondents identified groups of persons hanging out on the streets, drugs being sold in the street and too few recreational programs for juveniles as the three most significant problems in Brookmont Farms. These were followed by the run-down condition of housing, dirty streets, truancy, and poor street lighting. Of less concern were street gangs, abandoned houses or buildings, violent crimes, and property crimes. Among the fifteen problems identified on the survey, traffic enforcement, beggars or panhandlers, abandoned vehicles, and prostitution evoked the least concern from the respondents.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents reported that there are other problems in Brookmont Farms that need to be addressed including problems of crime and violence, problems pertaining to children and youth, problems related to the neighborhood environment, problems about homeownership and landlords and problems pertaining to the police. Fully 44 percent of this group said that crime and violence were the most serious problems. When asked whether landlords had cleaned up their properties in the last several years, just under 27 percent said "very much" but another 23 percent said "very little".

Respondents who said that Brookmont Farms had become a better place to live as compared to five years ago were also more likely to say that conditions related to crime in Brookmont Farms are getting better and that they feel safer in Brookmont Farms as compared to five years ago. Those who said that the neighborhood had become a worse place to live were also more likely to feel unsafe being out alone after dark in Brookmont Farms, that violent crime

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and street gangs are significant problems, that they or a member of their household had been a victim of a crime in Brookmont Farms, and that the service provided by the police is poor or very poor. They were also more likely to be white, be a homeowner, and have lived in the neighborhood for 11 years or more.

Those who said that there were significant to extreme problems in Brookmont Farms were more likely to say that Brookmont Farms is not patrolled satisfactorily or that they felt unsafe being out alone in Brookmont Farms during the day or at night.

### **Agencies Serving Brookmont Farms**

Using the A, B, C, D and F grading system, fully 25 percent of the respondents gave an A grade to the performance of the New Castle County Police. Thirteen percent gave A grades to the New Castle County Executive's Office and the New Castle County Council. New Castle County Libraries received an A grade from 50 percent of the respondents while about 20 percent gave A grades to County Licensing and Inspections and the County sewer system. Those who gave the performance of the County agencies an A or B grade were more likely to say that Brookmont Farms was patrolled satisfactorily or that the police have given Brookmont Farms special attention.

Over one-quarter (28 percent) of the respondents said that they have used any of the social agencies that are working in Brookmont Farms. Child, Inc. was most frequently mentioned as the agency being utilized.

### **Demographics**

Nearly 80 percent of the 134 respondents have graduated from high school. Slightly over 45 percent are married and nearly half (47 percent) live in households with children under ten or with children between 10 and 17 (49 percent). Whites made up 48 percent of the respondent group followed by African-Americans (42 percent). Just under eight percent said that they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin. Just over a third of the respondents had lived in Brookmont Farms for 11 years or more with an additional 12 percent indicating that they had lived there from six to ten years. Respondents were fairly evenly divided between homeowners (47 percent) and renters (53 percent) and more than half of the respondents (56 percent) reported that they live in households where the total amount of income that came into their household last year from all sources was less than \$35,000. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents were female and just over 90 percent were between the ages of 26 and 65.

Respondents with children under 10 in their household or between the ages of 10 and 17 were more likely to be female, be African-American, or be renters. African-American respondents were more likely to have lived in Brookmont Farms for five years or less and be renters. Those who had lived in the neighborhood from 11 or more years and homeowners were

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more likely than others to say that conditions related to crime in Brookmont Farms are getting better and that Brookmont Farms is a better place to live as compared to five years ago. Homeowners were also more likely than renters to say they or someone in their household had been a victim of a crime in Brookmont Farms, to be white and to have lived in the neighborhood for 11 years or more.

In general, the demographic characteristics were not strongly related to how individuals responded to the survey.



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